Southeast Arizona Sky Island Sampler | April 26 – May 5, 2024 | Trip Report | by Stephen Grace

Naturalist Journeys Tour Leaders Vernie Aikins and Stephen Grace with Marie, Sue, Tish, Lucy, Cheryl and Kathy.

Friday, April 26 Arrival in Tucson | Amerind Foundation | Willcox Playa – Cochise Lakes | Foothills Road | Portal

After gathering at an airport hotel, we boarded our van and set out across the Sonoran Desert, a land of sunshine and saguaros. Our guide, Vernie Aikins, a Tucson local, wasted no time in teaching us how to correctly say the name of this region's iconic cactus: "suh-WHA-ro." The "g" is silent, reflecting the word's origin in local indigenous languages. As we traversed the landscape Vernie loves, he pointed out blooming ocotillo, their red

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flowers contrasting with yellow creosote blooms. This land is relatively lush compared to other deserts. Renowned as the most biologically diverse desert in the United States, the Sonoran Desert and the Sky Islands—mountain ranges that rise like islands from the surrounding sea of desert—promised a plethora of botanical wonders, birds, and other wildlife on our journey.

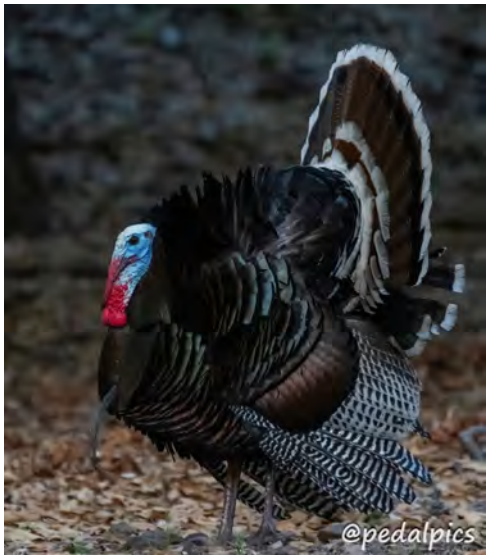
Our first stop was the Amerind Foundation, where we explored Texas Canyon in the Dragoon Mountains—a landscape of sculpted granite cliffs and pillars. This geological wonderland also offered a glimpse into the history of the Apache people in the region. We toured world-class art and archaeology museums, learning the stories of Indigenous peoples not just within Arizona, but across the Americas.

As we strolled the grounds, a patient Barn Swallow posed for photos, the bird's deeply forked tail dangling from the elegant metalwork of a museum facade. Lark Sparrows hopped out of the shade, showing their faces, handsomely patterned with chestnut cheeks and crown stripes. Our first encounter with a male Vermilion Flycatcher left us awestruck. Though a common sight in the Sonoran Desert, the uncommon beauty of this brilliant red bird provided a thrilling introduction to the region's avifauna.

Willcox Playa proved a productive birding venue, despite the blasting wind. As we braced ourselves against gusts and shielded our eyes from dust vortices, our attention was drawn to Wilson's Phalaropes spinning on the water. By swiftly rotating their bodies, these birds create whirlpools, drawing invertebrate prey toward the surface—a seemingly charming game that serves as a serious foraging technique. By employing this strategy, this slender shorebird can double its bodyweight, fueling its long migration from wintering grounds on high Andean lakes to breeding grounds in the marshes of the Great Plains and Intermountain West.

Female Wilson's Phalaropes boast attractive plumage. Pale bluish-gray, peachy orange, and rusty brown colors are accentuated by bold facial stripes of black and white. Females court and defend multiple mates, while the drab male phalaropes raise the chicks—a fascinating example of nature's role reversals.

Vernie spotted a Red-necked Phalarope, distinguished from its more robust and colorful Wilson's cousin by its dainty body, rusty neck, and dark gray cap. We marveled at the elegant long legs and upturned bills of American Avocets, the striking ruby eyes of Cinnamon Teal, and the bubble-gum-pink legs of Black-necked Stilts. A bevy of Least Sandpipers scurried across the mudflats surrounding the ponds, while a lone White-faced Ibis offered a close-up view of its maroon body and down-curved bill.



As we headed toward the Chiricahua Mountains, Vernie used his local knowledge to lead us off the beaten path. We stopped along a rural road for a glimpse of a Green-tailed Towhee and views of Lesser Goldfinches. But the star of the show was a Black-throated Sparrow. Anyone who says sparrows are boring brown birds has clearly never seen this species. White stripes above and below the bird's eyes combine with a bold black throat to make this sparrow a stunner.

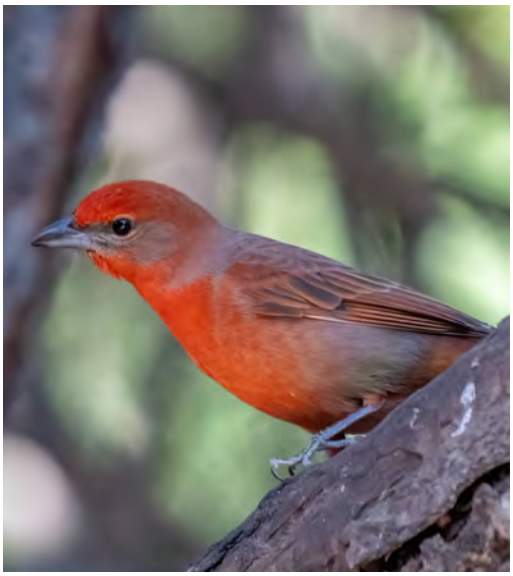
We watched two Swainson's Hawks on a nest and glimpsed a Greater Roadrunner streaking across the road. A Gambel's Quail stood atop a fencepost, acting as sentry for the covey. Throughout the tour, we often saw these charming birds, their topknots comically drooping as they scurried between patches of cover.

Two American Kestrels chased a raven—probably a Chihuahuan Raven given the location and habitat. But it's hard to be certain without a close look at maddeningly subtle diagnostic clues, like the long nasal bristles that extend toward the end of a Chihuahuan Raven's beak and the bird's white feather bases, which only show when its plumage is ruffled by wind. Some amount of mystery is good, our group agreed. We don't have to know precisely which species we are viewing to enjoy the beauty of birds and to appreciate their diverse bodies and behaviors.

Long rays of late-day sunlight cast the rumpled ranges of New Mexico, across the state border, in stark relief. As we approached Cave Creek Canyon, dubbed "Arizona's Yosemite," cool evening air whooshed across the landscape, carrying the scent of creosote rooted in desert soil. Cliffs surrounding the town of Portal glowed. Forged in a volcanic eruption some 27 million years ago, rock known as welded tuff was created when hot ash fused. The dramatic formations that flank the canyon are colored pink with potassium feldspar and painted by lichens with vivid shades of green and yellow. For a few moments at the beginning and end of each day, the sun sets the cliffs ablaze, as if reprising the history of these rocks that were born in fire before they turned to stone.

At Cave Creek Ranch, we settled into charming cabins spread through a woodland with a rushing stream. Then our group gathered to watch an Arizona Woodpecker, the only brown woodpecker in North America. We had our first look at a Blue-throated Mountain Gem, the largest hummingbird that nests in the United States.

While we birded, a pack of Javelinas ambled past us. Also known as the Collared Peccary, this herd animal with a big barrel body and little hooves on its dainty feet seems piglike. But peccaries have straighter tusks than the



curved teeth of true pigs. Peccaries, native to the Americas, also have rounded teddy-bear ears and an inconspicuous tail compared to the upright, pointed ears and long, tasseled tail of pigs, which evolved in Eurasia and Africa. Zoologists also note the different stomach anatomy and physiology of pigs and peccaries.

We enjoyed a dinner catered by Jackie Lewis, a woman who lives in the nearby town of Paradise. The scrumptious feast that Jackie prepared in Paradise and served us in Portal featured Greek salad, salmon, asparagus, grilled potatoes, and homemade cake.

After finishing dinner and then doing our daily checklist, we stepped outside to see a sky spattered with a stupendous number of stars. It's no wonder that Portal's population includes many astronomers who take full advantage of the canyon's dark skies. While stargazers stare into the distant reaches of the universe, birdwatchers flock to Cave Creek Canyon to gawk at the 370 species documented here.

Saturday, April 27 Portal | Chiricahuas | Owling in Cave Creek Canyon

At dawn, the rising sun turned the cliffs of Cave Creek Canyon into a shifting light show. This early morning light also highlighted the intricately scaled plumage pattern of Inca Doves. We saw our first Hepatic Tanager—a reddish-yellow bird that is beautiful, despite its name that means "liver-colored." A Cactus Wren vocalized like a cold engine struggling to turn over, and we saw a Brown Thrasher, a rare Portal sighting of this species with a range further east. Acorn Woodpeckers seemed to be everywhere, clowning around with their crazy voices. Their Neapolitan faces of red, black, and white flashed in the sunlight. We spotted several of their granaries—dead branches pockmarked with the acorn stashes of these gregarious, garrulous birds.

The white-nosed coati, also known as the coatimundi, is an omnivorous and opportunistic mammal with nimble hands and a mischievous mask like its close relative, the raccoon. But unlike its cousin, the coati is diurnal. A coati nicknamed Juanito is a regular visitor at Cave Creek Ranch. We watched this long-tailed creature lick a morning snack of peanut butter that a caretaker had smeared on a tree trunk.

We had our first of many looks at Coues Deer. This small-bodied, desert-adapted subspecies of White-tailed Deer has evolved large ears for dissipating heat. Tom turkeys fanned their tail-feathers and scraped their wings against the ground to impress females, who seemed indifferent to their vigorous courtship efforts. Known as Gould's Wild Turkey, this is the largest subspecies of Wild Turkey in North America. They were hunted to

extinction in the Chiricahuas by miners and settlers but have been successfully reintroduced. Efforts to bring back Thick-billed Parrots, also hunted to extinction in these mountains, failed. The captive-bred parrots never had an opportunity to develop strong flight muscles to flee Northern Goshawks, according to James Petersen, a Naturalist Journeys guide who lives in Portal and shared his local expertise with our group. Parrots are gone in the Chiricahuas, but trogons persist—we soon saw for ourselves.

The Elegant Trogon is a species with a range that extends into Southeast Arizona's Sky Islands. One of the most biodiverse places on the planet, the Sky Islands are where the subtropical Sierra Madre Occidental Mountains of Mexico meet the temperate biome of the Rocky Mountains and the Colorado Plateau. The Sonoran Desert to the west, and the Chihuahuan Desert and Great Plains to the east, add to the many influences that produce the bountiful and varied flora and fauna of Sky Islands like the Chiricahua Mountains.

The Chiricahuas are one of fifty-five ranges in Southeast Arizona and Northeast Mexico that emerge from a sea of desert, rising like islands in the sky. This isolation produces endemic species, from talus snails to squirrels, that live nowhere else on Earth. Also, the prominent rise of these Sky Islands creates numerous habitats that harbor diverse life. As elevation increases, temperature drops, and moisture increases. These climate variations create several bands of habitat on a single mountain. In Southeast Arizona, as you drive up a mountain road, you can quickly climb from spiny, sunbaked desert in dry lowlands toward desert grasslands. As you continue upward, you enter oak woodlands, and then oak-pine forests, and then pine forests, ultimately reaching mixed conifer forests and aspen groves on the highest peaks. This is like traveling more than 3,000 miles from hot deserts in Mexico to cool boreal forests of Canada.

The Elegant Trogon, the marquee species of Southeast Arizona's Sky Islands, makes use of the subtropical mountain flanks and lush riparian corridors. At the South Fork of Cave Creek Canyon, we heard the call of a male trogon, a sound reminiscent of a barking dog. After a brief walk in the woods, we glimpsed the bird—elegant indeed with his red breast topped by a white collar, an iridescent green back, and a coppery tail. We followed him as he moved among the sycamores, calling for a mate. Our group was ecstatic when this Elegant Trogon came into the open for clear views. As we stared and snapped photos, this bird from the tropics that breeds here slowly rotated his head, showing off his red eye rings and yellow bill to our group.

We managed to pull ourselves away from this avian wonder to search for other Sky Island species. A Painted Redstart, flaring the white patches on its wings to flush insects, rivaled the trogon in eye-catching beauty.





As we drove into the mountains, the air grew crisper and thinner as we ascended, and the vegetation transitioned from scattered oak to towering Douglas-fir and Apache Pine. In this pine-scented haven, we found many charismatic birds, including Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and Bushtits. We also spotted Mexican Chickadee, a species common south of the border but with a very restricted range in the United States. A Red-faced Warbler made a rare appearance by coming down to eye level and perching in the open—no "warbler neck" to see this little ruby-faced beauty.

The upper reaches of the road offered expansive views of vast desert below. In the distance, peaks rose from a dry expanse, providing verdant refuges for birds. As we explored the forested heights of the Chiricahuas, our group enjoyed getting to know species such as Greater Pewee, whose song sounds like the bird is shouting "José Maria." A Dusky-capped Flycatcher gave a mournful cry, and Yellow-eyed Juncos mesmerized us with their amber irises.

At Rustler Park, hail pelted the van. We covered our shivering bodies in every clothing layer we'd brought as snowflakes swirled in the wind. While this blizzard battered the mountaintop, the plains below baked in sweltering heat—a vivid lesson in how the Sky Islands harbor many different climates, accounting for a multitude of life in a relatively compact space.

Back at Cave Creek Ranch, Jackie served a delicious Mexican dinner she had cooked in her kitchen in Paradise and delivered to Portal. After dinner, we went owling with James, who worked his magic, conjuring the world's smallest owl out of the night. Hardly larger than a sparrow, an Elf Owl with big yellow eyes responded to James's calls, flying in and perching on a branch for all to see. A Bobcat was also briefly seen. This mysterious mammal was illuminated next to the road in the lights of the van.

Sunday, April 28 Paradise | Portal | Stateline Road | Willow Tank |Owling in Cave Creek Canyon

During an optional birding session in the early morning, species seen and heard included a Black Phoebe flycatching insects from a perch near the ground, an Audubon's Yellow-rumped Warbler with a throat as bright as the sun, and several Yellow Warblers delivering their distinctive songs of musical notes delivered in rapid succession, as if insistently saying, "Sweet, sweet, sweet, I'm so sweet." A Cactus Wren, Arizona's state bird,

perched in front of a cliff aglow with the morning sun—a perfect advertisement for Arizona's many natural charms. Male turkeys fanned their tail feathers while females slinked away from these displays.

For breakfast and birding, we ventured on a rural road to the home of Jackie and her husband, Winston, in the town of Paradise. Nothing beats a desert morning on a shaded porch, sipping coffee and orange juice while watching the red-orange beaks of Broad-billed Hummingbirds and the construction-cone-orange heads of Western Tanagers glow in sunlight—paradise indeed.

Jackie's homemade biscuits, moist and flaky, fueled our energy as we birded from the porch. When Broad-tailed Hummingbirds zoomed by, their wings made an insect-like trill, and their dazzling gorgets flashed in the sunlight. Black-headed Grosbeaks and Lazuli Buntings in breeding plumage added splashes of color to the scene. We eagerly awaited Winston's tales about Paradise, but for now, the birds held our attention.

When Winston joined us on the porch of the George Walker House, built around 1905, he told us rollicking tales of Paradise. Once a bustling hub in Arizona's mining heyday, this sleepy little hamlet hums with stories—and Winston loves to tell them. From a hapless miner falling in a hole, to a fraught battle over expanding the boundaries of the town cemetery, to the mysterious gravestone of a teacher inscribed with a mathematical riddle to challenge her students, Winston regaled us with colorful tales while we gawked at brightly hued birds crowding the feeders.

Tamara Winkler from Naturalist Journeys joined our group, telling us about her nearby ranch in New Mexico and a nonprofit land alliance that supports sustainable ranching and wildlife habitat.

We left Jackie's breakfast and Winston's history lesson, and with Tamara we went to explore the weathered headstones of the Paradise cemetery. This repository of the town's storied history is also a good birding venue. After spotting a Black-throated Gray Warbler in a nearby tree, we did some roadside botanizing, stopping to touch and smell plants on the way back to Portal.

In the feeder-strewn, bird-rich yard of a man named Dave Jasper, we had excellent looks at Pyrrhuloxia, the "desert cardinal." This bird closely related to the Northern Cardinal gave us great views of its bulbous orange bill, which separates it from the Northern Cardinal with its triangular red bill. We also studied at close range the




Northern Cardinal subspecies that lives here. Compared to its eastern counterpart, this Sonoran Desert subspecies has a taller crest, less black on the face, and shows a more subdued shade of red. This subspecies also has vocalizations different from the songs familiar to many easterners, with one researcher describing the songs of the two populations as diverse as German and Portuguese. Even a familiar species like the Northern Cardinal, when closely watched and heard in different geographic regions, can provide surprises.

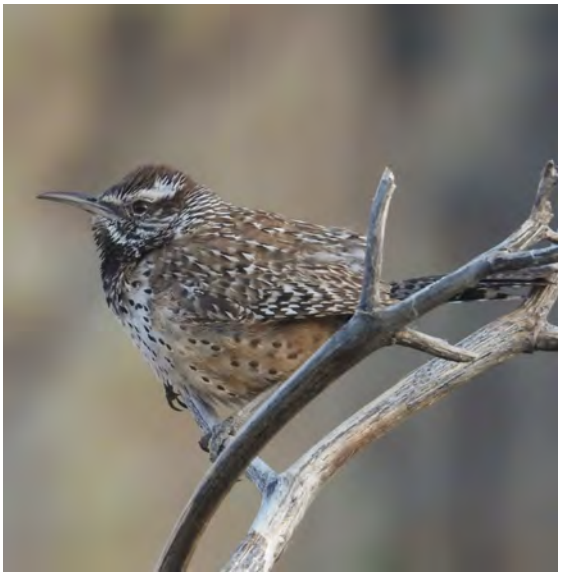
A Curve-billed Thrasher scratched around in the shadows. This mockingbird relative revealed its piercing yellow eyes when it strayed into the light. A Lucifer Hummingbird female was seen well by everyone, and a few people had fleeting looks at a male, his iridescent gorget flashing purple in the bright light. Lucifer means “light-bearing” in Latin and is linked in folklore with Venus, the planet that brings light to the dawn sky.

After lunch, we went looking for a Bendire’s Thrasher, colored tan like desert sand. After arriving a few minutes after one had been seen in a brush pile at Willow Tank, we staked out the area in hopes of spotting this elusive member of the Mimidae family. We left without success. But while driving along Stateline Road, a Bendire’s Thrasher appeared on the branch of a mesquite bush, giving us good looks at its bill, shorter than that of its more common cousin, the Curve-billed Thrasher.

Next, James Petersen worked hard to find us a Crissal Thrasher. One of these notoriously skulky birds briefly showed itself, emerging from thick brush to fly across the road before disappearing in a thorny tangle on the other side.

Then we headed back to Cave Creek Ranch to rest before dinner. When Tish started to cross the footbridge to her cabin, a skunk on the other side of the creek stepped onto the bridge. Tish talked to the skunk, speaking softly but assertively. The animal turned around and left the bridge, and Tish crossed without incident.

Our group had the pleasure of dining with Peg Abbott, founder, owner, and lead guide of Naturalist Journeys. Julie Fannon, marketing director and a co-owner of the company, also joined us. Peg, having just returned from Bhutan, where she saw rhododendrons, Red Pandas, and intricate art and architecture, shared tales from her travels.



During an optional owl prowl with James, this master birder called in a Whiskered Screech Owl, a species with a thin finger of range that reaches from Mexico into the Southwest. We glimpsed the hunter's ghostly silhouette against a star-strewn sky as the owl glided silently past us and then vanished in the night.

Monday, April 29 Chiricahua National Monument | San Pedro River

The pink rhyolite cliffs of the canyon turned incandescent in the morning light. Joining us for breakfast were Peg and Julie, along with Greg Smith, a Naturalist Journeys guide with decades of experience in just about every corner of the planet. After a final delicious meal served by Jackie, we bid farewell to Cave Creek Canyon. Although we were reluctant to abandon the beauty of this place and the people we'd met here, anticipation of new adventures stirred excitement.

En route to our next Sky Island venue, the Huachuca Mountains, we detoured while crossing the Chiricahuas to see a faraway waterfall. When viewed through a scope, a silver thread of water in the distance turned to diaphanous sheets and sparkling spray.

A few of us had a fleeting look at Montezuma Quail as they scurried across the road. This secretive species, though not uncommon, is rarely seen. Yellow-eyed Junco, a bird we had worked hard to find the day before, seemed to be everywhere. We noted that unlike their Dark-eyed Junco cousins, these birds with amber eyes tend to walk instead of hop.

A tip from a friendly birder, with whom we crossed paths near the upper reaches of the mountain, sent us searching for Red Crossbills and Pygmy Nuthatches. Success! Both species were cooperative, staying put at the tops of tall pines long enough for everyone to get good views through the scope.

We returned to Rustler Park, where the day before we'd retreated to the van when we were blasted by a blizzard. Now we slathered sunscreen on our faces and donned wide-brimmed hats. Vernie scouted among burned trees, blackened survivors of a wildfire that scorched this forest more than a decade ago. His persistence paid off, producing views of an Olive Warbler for everyone in our group. This oddly named species—neither olive-colored nor a member of the warbler family—has evolved orange and mustard-yellow hues that conceal it among mistletoe in treetops. Vernie also used his birding expertise to find for our group a Buff-breasted Flycatcher, another high-country specialist in the Sky Islands.




At Chiricahua National Monument, we ate a picnic lunch while watching bold Mexican Jays with their soft blue and gray colors. Then we went for a hike to explore the captivating geology of this place. Gargantuan boulders were plastered with lime-green lichens, and improbable-looking hoodoos rose into the cerulean sky. Amid the purplish-red wood and the pink, urn-shaped blooms of manzanita, we saw a Rock Wren perched on a stone shelf. Its song echoed off stone walls while two Zone-tailed Hawks soared overhead, showing us their banded tails that separate them from Turkey Vultures. The interplay between this otherworldly landscape and the diverse forms of life it supports left lasting impressions.

When we dropped down from the Chiricahuas and drove across lowland desert, we watched a Greater Roadrunner sprint a zigzag route next to a rural road. Another one of these birds flapped its wings and landed several feet above the ground. It perched in mesquite, putting the lie to the story that the roadrunner cannot fly. Though this species has evolved to chase prey on foot, it can fly in short bursts from predators like coyotes. Roadrunners cannot outrun coyotes, despite what cartoons taught us. The truth of science is often more interesting than the stories we fabricate. Case in point: Not only do desert creatures like the Greater Roadrunner have to cope with heat; they must also survive the cold temperatures of desert nights. By turning its back to the morning sun and raising its feathers to expose a black patch of skin that acts like a solar panel, this iconic bird of the Southwest warms its chilled body.

Chihuahuan Meadowlarks perched on fenceposts, the abundant white in their tails separating them from Eastern Meadowlarks. We had superb looks at Red-tailed Hawks on powerline poles, and along the roadside, raptors soared. Swainson's Hawks climbed and glided through the cloudless blue above the desert floor.

Casa de San Pedro, a boutique bed and breakfast for birders, is tucked in a lush riparian corridor of Fremont cottonwoods along the San Pedro River. This world-class base for natural history exploration features charming Southwestern architecture and gourmet food, including homemade pies available at all hours. Vigorous birding burns off the delicious calories.

Our dinner at Casa de San Pedro was some of the finest Mexican food imaginable, with fresh guacamole, lentil soup, Chile relleno, tostada, and flan. This delicious feast was followed by a presentation on hummingbird banding delivered by Naturalist Journeys Elissa Fazio.

Elissa shared stories of her hard-won knowledge, gleaned from years of capturing, banding, and releasing these remarkable creatures. Holding the tools and the tiny banding rings in our own hands helped us understand the precision and devotion necessary to study the hummingbirds of Arizona, a state that boasts a list of seventeen species—astonishing to those of us from states with one or two hummer species. We also had the opportunity to hold a nest with two tiny eggs, smaller than jellybeans, a touch larger than Tic Tacs. A magnifying glass was needed to see them well.

The next day, our hummingbird appreciation accelerated when we had a remarkable encounter with one of these birds in the wild.

Tuesday, April 30 Ash Canyon Audubon Center | Coronado National Monument | Hereford Bridge | Bisbee

On an optional morning bird walk around the grounds of Case de San Pedro, several Mule Deer ran through tawny grass against a backdrop of mountains bathed in alpenglow. A male Vermilion Flycatcher caught this early light as the bird hovered and flapped, either hawking insects or displaying for a female.

A birder we ran into by the river told us that on radar the night before, 2.5 million birds had been tracked in the area. This seemed plausible, given the extraordinary numbers of warblers and tanagers we came across. When we heard a tanager calling, we tracked the bird to a branch and saw that it was a female with a big bill. Just as we figured out that it was not Hepatic or Western, her male mate joined her–clearly a Summer Tanager, the only all-red tanager.

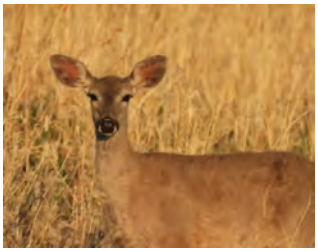
After a tasty breakfast of French toast and homemade pastries, we headed to the famous Ash Canyon Audubon Center. Although the hummingbird viewing was slower than we anticipated, the songbird viewing exceeded our expectations. Among the highlights, a bright-orange male Bullock's Oriole gave us superb looks. We glimpsed a beautiful Indigo Bunting, the species that sparked Peg Abbott's interest in birding many years ago, and we watched several Lazuli Buntings, their heads as blue as their namesake gem. Male Western Tanagers boasted bright-yellow bodies and heads that glowed an unreal shade of orange. When White-winged Doves perched in the open, sunlight revealed the beautiful blue markings around their eyes, like the makeup of a movie star. Several doves scattered, and one panicked bird sped past us with a Cooper's Hawk in swift pursuit.

We drove to the top of Coronado National Monument in the Huachucas for a picnic lunch with expansive views into nearby Mexico. We had a clear look at the stark border that separates the two countries. Birds, of course, do not respect national boundaries, and we celebrated the thought of feathered migrants flying back and forth across the wall.

While driving to the Hereford Bridge along the San Pedro River, we were gobsmacked by a remarkable sight. A child's blue plastic swimming pool was lifted off the ground by a dust devil. This whirling dervish of wind and sand deposited the plastic pool in a neighbor's yard. Imagine the stories that this mysterious pool relocation would cause!

At the Hereford Bridge, we fled the hot wind, finding sanctuary in a lush gallery forest. In cool shade beneath willows and cottonwoods, we enjoyed excellent warbler viewing. While Marie and I hung back and let the group forge ahead, we found a hummingbird nest. A mother hummer settled onto her tiny cup of twigs and lichens bound with elastic spiderweb, a material that will expand without breaking when her eggs hatch and the growing chicks stretch the nest. It seemed that Elissa's talk from the previous evening had come to full and frantic life as the mother left the nest and returned several times, her wings blurring as we watched and snapped photos. When the rest of the group returned, everyone gathered to have a good look. Only a couple people at a time crept close, and we took photos with long lenses so we wouldn't stress the mother. Female hummers are difficult to identify. But Elissa said that based on a photo I sent her, we likely had encountered a Black-chinned Hummingbird.

That evening, while we drove to dinner, an American Kestrel carried a lizard within view of our van. We watched a kettle of Turkey Vultures circle above the tailings that rise near the historic mining town of Bisbee. Now chock-full of new-age artists and people fleeing the mainstream to live on the fringes of society, funky Bisbee's boomtime buildings from the heyday of mining look like the setting for a Wild West film. Yards on the steep hillsides were filled with quirky decorations like toilet bowls planted with flowers and fences festooned with rusty shovels. This town was full of character—and filled with characters. Tattooed buskers gathered on street corners, and eccentrics in old-timey Western garb walked the winding streets as we ambled around town and took in the ambiance before dinner.

The Copper Pig provided a meal so memorable that each of us agreed it was on our personal list of favorite restaurants—perhaps near the very top. Not only was the savory pork a big hit, but also the salmon, shrimp and salads earned rave reviews.

Back at Casa de Pedro, we ate slices of apple, lemon, and berry pies while doing our daily checklist—a fine end to a fun day.

Wednesday, May 1 San Pedro House | Miller Canyon

A morning walk through the fields and riparian habitat around Casa de San Pedro produced views of warbler and deer—and a great look at a Hooded Skunk, a fluffy rug of an animal.

Abert's Towhees were seen well along the river. Their black faces and habit of moving in pairs distinguishes this member of the sparrow family from their Canyon Towhee cousin.

After good coffee at Casa de San Pedro and a tasty breakfast of fresh fruit and eggs benedict with a Mexican twist, we headed to the San Pedro House to continue our morning birding. We peeked at a cavity in an ancient cottonwood, hoping to find a Western Screech-Owl known to live there, but it appeared that nobody was home. Vermilion Flycatchers and Western Tanagers stole the show, and a Gopher Snake surprised us. This gorgeous reptile slithered through dry grass next to the trail.

Another delightful sighting occurred when a Red-spotted Purple Admiral flapped past us. This butterfly is nontoxic but has evolved a color scheme that resembles the noxious Pipevine Swallowtail—a fine example of Batesian mimicry, a strategy in which a benign species evolves to resemble a dangerous one.

At Miller Canyon, we had our first look at Rivoli's Hummingbird. This large hummer with a teal neck and purple head was formerly known as the Magnificent Hummingbird. It certainly is magnificent, we agreed. Other hummers—Broad-tailed, Broad-billed, Black-chinned, and Anna's—joined the Rivoli's hummers at the feeders.

While hiking a trail into the mountains, a Virginia's Warbler made us crazy by vocalizing without showing itself; then a Black-throated Gray Warbler pulled this same stunt. Arizona Sisters, however, granted us great views and phenomenal photos. These pretty butterflies fluttered and perched in the bright sunlight. Springtime in Southeast Arizona is a fabulous time for lovers of lepidoptery. A Queen Butterfly, a Monarch mimic, provided a vivid example of Müllerian mimicry. The two species have evolved to mimic each other's bright colors as a form




of protection. Predators recognize the wing patterns and avoid eating both butterflies, as they are unpalatable and poisonous because of the toxins they ingest. This mimicry can fool people into confusing a Queen with a Monarch. But the keen observers in our group recognized the Queen in all her glory.

Another birding group we came across in Miller Canyon reported a Northern Goshawk along the upper trail. We were tempted to follow in their bootsteps. But diminishing time and depleted legs prompted us to turn back instead of climbing an arduous route for a slim chance to glimpse this raptor rarely seen. We enjoyed the bird vicariously through their excited telling of the encounter.

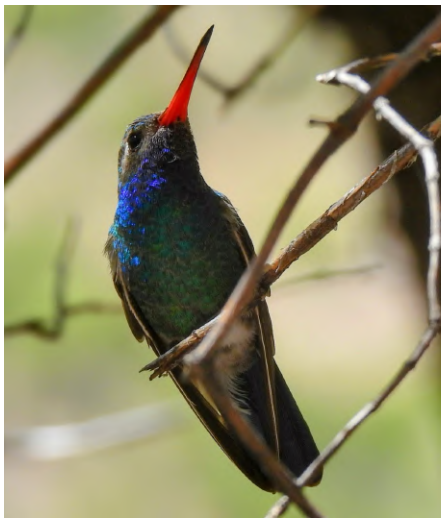
We headed back to Casa de San Pedro for free time, and then ate dinner at a pizzeria. This feast was followed by slices of Casa de San Pedro's famous pie, which we ate while completing our daily checklist.

As we were finishing our list, a winged creature flapped vigorously above the patio. I ran to my room to retrieve my "bat detector." This device plugs into a smartphone and identifies bats by analyzing their biosonar. Several species were identified, including Big Brown Bat, Cave Bat, Small-footed Myotis, and Long-legged Myotis—a mammalian finale to end the day's bird symphony. This clever device also changes the frequency of the bats' echolocation, making the ultrasonic sound audible to human ears. With this wonder of technology, we eavesdropped on the world of bats while we stood beneath the stars.

Thursday, May 2 Sonoita | Paton Center for Hummingbirds | Patagonia Roadside Rest Stop | Patagonia Lake

After a morning bird walk and a final delicious breakfast at Casa de San Pedro, we packed up and left the Huachucas. En route to the Santa Rita Mountains, our next Sky Island, we stopped along the highway to watch Pronghorn. This compelling species speeds across the open spaces of the American West. The fastest land animal in North America, the Pronghorn evolved to outrun the American Cheetah, a predator that went extinct long ago while the Pronghorn persisted on the "American Serengeti."

Several Pronghorn ran atop a hill next to the highway; they were briefly silhouetted against the sky before disappearing on the other side. When we turned off on a rural road near Sonoita, we watched a lone male Pronghorn at close range. Then we saw several herds. The white rumps of these animals brighten when they squeeze their muscles to signal danger to herd members. Bright-white behinds stood out from a mile away, making these animals easy for us to spot in the sparsely treed landscape.



We learned that sacaton grass was being restored here. This native bunchgrass can stand seven feet tall and provides essential habitat for Botteri's Sparrow and other birds and wildlife. A colony of Black-tail Prairie Dogs had also been reintroduced here. We discussed how these cute critters were talking about us with barks, chirps, yips, and squeals, using communication so sophisticated that some scientists contend it meets the criteria for a language. Prairie dogs convey information about the size and shape of a predator through the frequency and duration of their alarm calls. They can even tell members of their town if a creature is a wild Coyote or a domestic dog.

Prairie dogs are also ecosystem engineers and a keystone species, spreading plants by dispersing their seeds, and excavating tunnels that facilitate water movement and provide homes for animals like Burrowing Owls. These stout-bodied rodents also serve as a vital food source for raptors. We watched one sentry who seemed to have his eyes on the sky, or at least on the shadows of birds passing across this prairie dog town so vast that it seemed like a metropolis undergoing suburban sprawl.

A Horned Lark enjoying breakfast by the roadside sparked Kathy's curiosity. As a butterfly enthusiast, she couldn't help but wonder about the caterpillar this bird was feasting on. All living beings, from birds to insects, hold significance for naturalists on our journey of exploration and discovery.

At the Paton Center for Hummingbirds, we had great looks at a big species boldly colored: the Violet-crowned Hummingbird. The bird's clean white front is complemented by a violet cap and a bright-red bill tipped in black, as if dipped in ink.

A Thick-billed Kingbird, a tropical visitor from the south that breeds in the Sky Islands, perched above us. As we looked at its namesake bill, a docent explained that this bird we were watching had arrived just a day before we did.

We chased another rarity, Rufous-backed Robin, in a wash but failed to find this bird. We did, however, see several Summer Tanagers colored vivid red as compensation. And best of all, several Gray Hawks circled overhead. Their intricately patterned wings seemed to glow in the bright sunlight—a glorious sight well worth a sweaty walk in the midday heat. Alongside a trickling stream, we stopped to study damselflies resting on rocks and butterflies flitting above mud banks.

After leaving the Paton Center, we stopped at the world-famous site of the "Patagonia Picnic Table Effect." Legend has it that soon after a rarity was spotted here—a Rose-throated Becard—other birders flocked to the rest stop and promptly discovered other rarities like Thick-billed Kingbird and Five-striped Sparrow. We didn't see or hear any rarities, but White-throated Swifts flung themselves across the sky with their boomerang wings. When they flew toward us, we had good looks at their chalky undersides, and we observed how the flight of swifts, characterized by rapid bursts of their stiff and fluttering wings, differs from that of swallows, who flap their more rounded wings with comparatively languid beats.

White-throated Swifts are marvels of the bird world that nest in cliff crevices, using their saliva to glue cups of twigs and moss to sheer walls. Unlike swallows who often perch, swifts spend most of their lives aloft, eating, drinking, mating, even sleeping, while slashing their long, scythe-shaped wings through the sky.

At Patagonia Lake we enjoyed caterpillar phacelia, a plant with fuzzy flowering stems reminiscent of caterpillars. We saw a Pied-billed Grebe and a less common species, the Eared Grebe, a bird with golden "ears" protruding from the sides of its head (males and females wear the same breeding plumage). Another brilliant-red Summer Tanager perched in the open for close looks and clear photos. We watched Phainopeplas drinking from a pond, and the white underwings of these shiny black birds caught our eyes when they flew.

Butterflies and an intriguing trapdoor spider rounded out our natural history experience here. We headed to Green Valley to check into our hotel, our base for the next three nights as we explored the Santa Rita Mountains, our third Sky Island.

Dinner in the nearby town of Tubac at a quiet Italian restaurant provided a relaxing ambience, perfect for reminiscing about the two thirds of our tour that had transpired and speculating about our adventures to come.

While Marie and I chatted, we realized that we had crossed paths before this tour. Almost exactly a year earlier, I had joined a bird walk led by a friend of mine on the Olympic Peninsula. A Naturalist Journeys group, of which Marie was a member, also went on the walk. While talking with Marie's group and guide Mason Flint, I learned about Naturalist Journeys. Though Mason and I had never met, we realized we shared a friend and mentor in Dennis Paulson, one of the finest naturalists we've known.

After meeting Marie and Mason and the Naturalist Journeys group, I contacted Peg Abbott and expressed my interest in working for the company. Peg gave me the greatest job in the world: helping people like Marie explore their curiosity and experience the wonders of this surprisingly small world.

When you spend time with people who love nature, countless small-world connections tend to emerge. It's not uncommon on a Naturalist Journeys tour for a group member to mention someone's name, sparking recognition from another tour participant, who exclaims, "I know that person!" Birds bring us together, and love of the natural world binds us.

Back at our hotel in Green Valley, before we parted for the evening, I presented a gift to each member of our group. Everyone received a copy of "The Nature of Madera Canyon." I'd asked the author, Douglas Moore, to personally sign a book for each member of our group. My grandmother, Patsy Proctor, had worked with Moore to create this book from the curriculum she developed while volunteering as an educator and conservationist in Madera Canyon, our group's destination the next morning.

Not since 2004 had I been to Madera Canyon. The last time I was there was a few days after my grandmother passed away. Family members had gathered in the place Patsy had loved and had worked tirelessly to protect. After her memorial service, I ran on a trail from Proctor Ramada, named in honor of Patsy and my grandfather, John Proctor, also a docent in Madera Canyon. While moving toward the summit of Mount Wrightson, climbing through habitats as diverse as desert scrub and conifer forest, I noticed that my knees weren't as strong as they used to be. I also noticed the transition between different life zones, from grassland to oak woodland to oak-pine woodland to mixed conifer forest—a concept my grandmother had shared with me when I tagged along with her and listened to her stories of Madera Canyon's natural wonders, from the fishhook barrel cactus to the canyon tree frog to the Zone-tailed Hawk.

Now, two decades later, my life's path had led me back to this place. I was traveling in my grandmother's footsteps, educating people about the life zones of the Sky Islands, making the case for conserving the biodiversity of this extraordinary place. Growing up with Patsy Proctor as my grandmother was a gift. Returning to Southeast Arizona with a group of travelers entranced by the beauty of the natural world was a treasure. One of nature's finest classrooms, Madera Canyon is worth much more as part of an intact ecosystem than the minerals that would be ripped from the earth in a proposed mine nearby.

Friday, May 3 Madera Canyon | Desert Meadows Park | Tubac

In the morning, we headed to Madera Canyon. We were met at Proctor Ramada by Rusty Lombardo, President Emeritus of Friends of Madera Canyon (FoMC), the nonprofit organization that my grandmother co-founded. In the shade of the ramada that honors my grandmother's legacy, Rusty spoke to our group about FoMC's education and conservation work that continues to this day.

A few months earlier, while chatting with Rusty, we realized that his son and I had worked as environmental educators aboard the same historic sailing ship—another small world story of people moving in the same circles as they explore the natural world across continents and seas.

When our group went for a birding and natural history walk with Rusty, we followed a path among boulders of granite and rhyolite. As we walked by a fishhook barrel cactus at the edge of a woodland, a Zone-tailed Hawk soared in the distance. At a seasonal stream, Vernie found Canyon Tree Frogs. While we stood in the shade listening to the water flow, an enormous flying insect snagged our attention—a carpenter bee.

Rusty showed us the holes that carpenter bees had made in a wooden bench where walkers sit to rest. He explained how docile these creatures are, posing little danger to people. I remembered my grandmother stopping to chat with walkers on this same trail. She had been on a mission to help everyone understand that the creatures they fear, from bees to snakes to cougars, play integral roles in the ecosystems that support the things we love. Carpenter bees are a food source for woodpeckers, and woodpeckers excavate the nest holes used by the Elegant Trogon. My grandmother spoke to me—and to any curious person whose path she crossed in Madera Canyon—about the meandering but meaningful connections that bind all things in the web of life.

While visiting the feeders at Santa Rita Lodge, we saw a Bronzed Cowbird with shockingly red eyes, and male Wild Turkeys put on a spectacular show as they pursued females.

At Kubo B&B, we staked out the feeders for a Berylline Hummingbird, but this rarity revealed itself only to Vernie. He spotted it while the rest of us were charmed by a Bridled Titmouse gathering nesting material a few feet in front of us. Though the Berylline eluded us, a Rivoli's hummer put on a good show at the feeders.

When we drove down from Madera Canyon and returned to Green Valley, Desert Meadows Park provided an absolute bonanza of life. Not only did we savor the sight of blooming cacti and colorful butterflies, but also lizards grabbed our interest. Among the many herps we observed, one standout was a Desert Spiny Lizard with a



gorgeous green throat. A Zebra-tailed Lizard also intrigued us. When threatened, this creature lifts its striped tail and waves it back and forth to distract predators. This lizard managed to momentarily distract our group; then we resumed our bird search.

We had our first look at Lucy's Warbler. Vernie followed one of these birds with his bins as the bird flew to its nest, a snug hollow inside a roof beam. One of only two cavity-nesting species in the Wood Warbler family (the other is the Prothonotary Warbler), Lucy's breeds in the driest habitat of any warbler in the United States or Canada. Though this species doesn't boast the bold yellows, reds, and black of many other New World warblers, the cinnamon color on its crown and rump lends Lucy's Warbler a subtle beauty. Watching one of these pale birds probe the yellow blossoms of a palo verde was one of many highlights at Desert Meadows Park.

While a Gray Hawk and a Swainson's Hawk flew overhead, a Curve-billed Thrasher fed two young in its nest, nestled within the spiny fortress of a cholla. Phainopeplas perched on treetops, and a male Costa's Hummingbird posed atop a metal sculpture, his flared purple gorget glinting in the sunlight as he turned his head. A Rufous-winged Sparrow came into the open for all to see.

Dinner was in the historic town of Tubac at Elvira's, a funky, upscale eatery with artsy glass sculptures dangling from the ceiling. The restaurant offers a contemporary twist on classic Mexican cuisine and features an extensive mole menu. After this adventure in fine dining, we found a quiet space in our hotel and checked off the many species we had seen that day, putting satisfied smiles on our tired faces.

Saturday, May 4 Montosa Canyon | Desert Meadows Park

After breakfast at a friendly family diner near our hotel, he headed to Montosa Canyon. A Swainson's Hawk that was perched near a bridge brought our van to a stop. We filed out to photograph the handsome raptor; we kept snapping photos after the bird flew to another perch on a bridge railing and posed in front of a row of American flags. Cliff Swallows swooped over the riverbed as we climbed back into the van.

Vernie's pre-tour location scouting, and his diligence and persistence during the tour as he searched for birds by eye and ear, was much appreciated by our group—his talent and effort were especially apparent in Montosa Canyon. He quickly put us on what he thought was a Five-striped Sparrow, a bird that had been hanging out in the canyon for a few weeks. But the sparrow was in shadow, so Vernie wasn't certain that this was our target

species, a rare bird in the region. Could it be a more common species, the Black-throated Sparrow? When he studied an underexposed photo taken by another birder in the canyon, the five white stripes on the bird's black throat were apparent—Vernie had led us to our target.

While we walked among purple bloom of larkspur and watched swallowtail butterflies, Vernie searched for a Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet. This flycatcher vocalized close to the trail but stubbornly kept itself hidden amid hackberry and mesquite. Named for its lack of rictal bristles (the stiff feathers that surround the beaks of most other flycatchers), this shy bird finally found the courage to sit in the open for our group to see.

Next, Vernie tracked down a Bell's Vireo so we could get a look at who was making a song that sounds like a sped-up cassette tape with brief pauses between screechy, energetic bursts. Then, Vernie led us to a sweat lodge, a destination that surprised us—and then filled us with appreciation.

While scouting this canyon for our group, Vernie had come across a man of Navajo and Hopi heritage. Cayce, a caretaker of this sweat lodge, shared with our group his history of his battle with the National Forest Service and the Smithsonian, which wanted to build a telescope at the site sacred to Cayce and his people. He explained that a coalition of tribes had prevailed in their struggle to preserve this site, a place that now serves as a gathering spot for elders. Young people struggling to find their path in life come here seeking guidance from older generations. The sweat lodge is where living language and timeless traditions continue to be nurtured, where the roots of an ancient culture remain anchored in earth that Cayce's ancestors tended for centuries. In this place, hope for Cayce and people related to him continues to grow.

Our group was grateful for the opportunity to spend time with Cayce and hear his stories, as we had heard the stories of Rusty, the representative from Friends of Madera Canyon who had spoken with us the day before. Learning the history of people who care about the land, and hearing about the challenges and triumphs of caretakers of this region, gave us a deeper appreciation for the Sky Islands of Southeast Arizona.

The clear song of a Canyon Wren, a series of descending trills evocative of the Southwest's wild places, echoed off rock walls as we returned to our van. As we drove down from Montosa Canyon, not even a flat tire could deflate our buoyant mood.

After coming up with a plan to rectify our vehicle mishap and get us safely back to town, we savored the scenery. In the foreground of a spectacular mountain vista, stalks of ocotillo held red tassels of flowers. The spines of teddy-bear cholla looked fuzzy and huggable. Beneath a clear blue sky, while we waited for Vernie's wife and dad to arrive and drive people back to Green Valley, we celebrated our good fortune to have broken down on a relatively accessible road in one of the most beautiful places on the planet.

I picked up a new van, and after the group had lunch and rested, we returned to Desert Meadows Park. This wild oasis amid Green Valley's suburban spawl once again provided superb immersion in the natural wonders of the Sonoran Desert. Vernie's wife, Kim, joined us and found a Verdin. The cuteness of this little songbird with a yellow head and chestnut shoulder patches belies its sturdiness—this species builds spherical nests to roost in on cold winter nights and survives on water from the food it forages in desert scrublands.

A Curve-billed Thrasher perched with a Phainopepla. Neither of these species are rare, and both had been checked off our list early in the tour. But seeing them well delighted those of us who don't live in the desert. A Desert Spiny Lizard impressed us with its push-up display, and two Gambel's Quail climbed high in a tree for reasons unknown, prompting playful speculation among us about their arboreal pursuits.

At our farewell dinner, while we toasted our new friends—avian and human—several Lesser Nighthawks, a species we hadn't yet seen, appeared over a nearby pond at dusk. These nightjars darted and dashed among the Barn Swallows and Northern Rough-winged Swallows swarming the sky.

As we were driving back from dinner, our headlights illuminated a jackrabbit the size of a small deer; we quipped that this creature looked less like its desert cottontail cousin than it resembled a little kangaroo. Silly humor mixed with serious nature contemplation—this blend had been a signature of our tour.

The sadness caused by our time together winding down was forgotten the next morning when Vernie provided a satisfying end to our journey.

Sunday, May 5 Saguaro National Park | Departure from Tucson

Tours led by Naturalist Journeys are about more than birds. Birds are at the center of each journey, but these tours explore all the natural world. The tours are also about people.

Vernie is a big man with a big heart. Other world-class birders could have led our group to birds, but none of them could have provided the deeply personal experience of being guided by a local who lives in the region and loves sharing his backyard with visitors. I reflected on my good fortune to be working with him as we traveled through a landscape familiar from my journey here many years ago.

Our exceptional group of guests—six individuals with generous hearts, sharp minds, and good humor—solidified the feeling that my life's path, nudged by my grandmother's love of the natural world all those years ago, had led me to the perfect job. She would have enjoyed Vernie's authenticity, as does everyone, and she would have been impressed by his knowledge of birds. She would have been equally impressed by Vernie and his wife's work with Kim's nonprofit, Southern Arizona Accessible Wildlife Refuge (SAAWR), making the outdoors a reality for all.

After another fun breakfast at our favorite family restaurant, our group chased a Least Tern on a local pond. No luck—this rarity disappeared before we arrived. Our next mission, however, was a resounding success.

Vernie's knowledge of Arizona's backroads and off-the-beaten-path birding spots was on full display as he drove us toward something special that he'd come across on one of his explorations: the nest of a Crested Caracara. On the way there, we noticed atop a powerline pole the nest of a Red-tailed Hawk. We pulled over for superb views of a doting parent and fuzzy chick.

Nestled in the arms of a saguaro was the nest of the Crested Caracara, a tropical falcon that looks like a hawk with its raptorial beak and acts like a vulture with its scavenging behavior. A parent fed pieces of carrion to a young bird, providing captivating viewing. While we were watching these caracaras, another wonder appeared: a little bird poked its head out of the cactus.

Holes made in wet cactus flesh by Gilded Flickers and Gila Woodpeckers harden into nesting holes for these woodpeckers, and for other cavity nesters. An Ash-throated Flycatcher peeked out from the saguaro before disappearing back into the mystery of this giant cactus, a living water tower that can grow to sixty feet tall and weigh as much as six tons. The saguaro fascinated my grandmother. And it stirred my imagination when I was a child wandering through the desert and dreaming about what I might become when I grew up.

Vernie pointed out a “crested” saguaro. This strange form occurs when the cells of the cactus mutate and divide outward, instead of spreading in the circular pattern of a normal saguaro. This produces a bizarre crest at the top of the cactus, a growth form like a folded fan.

Compounding our cactus curiosity, we saw some saguaros in bloom. The dazzling white flowers at the tops of these desert plants open for less than twenty-four hours, blooming in the evening and then remaining open into the following afternoon. The saguaro relies on desert dwellers for pollination. At night, bats are attracted to the bright flowers that smell strongly of melon; these mammals stick their hairy heads deep into the saguaro blossoms, covering themselves in pollen as they forage for nectar. By day, White-winged Doves, so prevalent throughout our tour and so beautiful, help perpetuate the saguaro, this icon of the Southwest. It is also a keystone species in the Sonoran ecosystem. The saguaro provides fruit for birds and other animals, as well as nesting habitat for creatures that find shelter within its arms. All living things are linked, and each species is connected to others in surprising ways—a lesson I learned from my grandmother in this land many years ago.

Vernie spotted Purple Martins perched on a wire—a surprise for those of us who associate this bird with water. This desert subspecies of Purple Martin has evolved to survive amid the challenging conditions of the Sonoran Desert, a land of stark beauty and endless intrigue. Life takes surprising twists and turns, making every journey we take through the natural world an adventure.

We had learned so much on our Sky Island journey—and had forgotten a few things along the way. As Vernie drove us through Saguaro National Park to the Tucson airport, where our group would part ways, I made the mistake of pronouncing the “g” in saguaro. If you think Vernie let that slide, well, you didn’t travel with us and hear our good-natured banter. We never stopped laughing, even in the middle of changing a tire. You cannot fake having fun on a tour, and fortunately I never had to try. I was grinning when Vernie dropped me off at the airport and everyone in our group hugged me goodbye.

The things we saw! The fun we had! The friendships we made! While making my way through airport security, I was already missing our group. I like to think that Patsy Proctor would have been proud of us for exploring the natural history of Southeast Arizona’s Sky Islands, and for caring about the future of this special place.

Naturalist Journeys, LLC is an equal opportunity service provider and committed to the goal of ensuring equal opportunity for all in employment and program delivery.

Photos: Group (Vernie Aikins - VA), Road to Cave Creek Canyon (VA), Elegant Trogon (VA), White-nosed Coati (Steve Grace - SG), Vermilion Flycatcher (SG), Verdin (SG), Javelina (SG), Common Raven (VA), Wild Turkey (VA), Elegant Trogon (SG), Red-faced Warbler (VA), Scenic (VA), Gambel's Quail (VA), Black-chinned Hummingbird (VA), Elf Owl (VA), Cave Creek Scenic (SG), Woodhouse's Scrub-jay (VA), Western Tanager (VA), Arizona Woodpecker (VA), Group (VA), Scott's Oriole (VA), Bendire's Thrasher (VA), Cactus Wren (SG), Blue-throated Mountain-Gem (VA), Lucy and Tish on bridge at Cave Creek Ranch (SG), Mexican Jay (SG), Chiricahua National Monument (VA), Lazuli Bunting (SG), Ladder-backed Woodpecker (VA), Black-headed Grosbeak (SG), Indigo Bunting (VA), Bullocks Oriole (VA), Group (VA), Mule Deer (SG), Hooded Skunk (SG), Claret Cup Hedgehog Cactus (SG), Arizona Sister (VA), Broad-tailed Hummingbird (VA), Rivoli's Hummingbird (VA), Broad-billed Hummingbird (SG), Scenic (SG), Pronghorn (SG), Black-tailed Prairie Dog (VA), Summer Tanager (VA), Group Birding (VA), Cactus (VA), Curved-billed Thrasher & Twin-spotted Spiny Lizard (VA), Gray Hawk (VA), Costa's Hummingbird (VA), Lucy's Warbler in Palo Verde (SG), Twin-spotted Spiny Lizard (VA), Crested Caracara Nest (VA), Ash-throated Flycatcher (VA, Rufous-winged Sparrow (SG), Crested Caracara (SG), Arizona Passion Flower (SG), Red-tailed Hawk (VA)