

TUCSON AUDUBON BIRDATHON 2008

GREEN DAY PACKERS TEAM REPORT



Left to right: Michael Wyman, Jules Wyman, Eng-Li Green, Paul Green

This low-energy-use team came about from a realization during last year's Birdathon that burning gas to tear around the region was, for us (Paul and Eng-Li), at odds with the desire to protect bird habitats. Coupling this with our love of upper Sonoran desert scrub habitat, we chose this year to do all our birding on foot in an area very close to where we live. Arthur Pack Regional Park, which is managed by Pima County, contains a patch of Ironwood-Saguaro habitat around the southern half of the Crooked Tree Golf Course. The little-used network of trails around the Hardy Wash and the drier desert scrub area are great for short opportunistic birding hikes, especially at both ends of a working day.

We arranged to meet Jules (an amazing and very knowledgeable young birder, aged 9) and his Dad, Michael Wyman, at 5.30 am on Sunday, 4 May 2008. For those of you who do not live in the Tucson region, our first birds were the common species that welcome the morning every day. So even as we greeted each other by the roadside, we were checking off Gambel's Quail, Curve-billed Thrasher, Cactus Wren, White-winged Dove, Verdin, House Finch.

We then hurried on to the main park entrance, hoping that our early start would allow us to cut across the golfing greens to the ponds. As with any Birdathon, maximizing the species count involves sampling as many habitats as possible. For us, those habitats included the general use park facilities and water bodies around the golf course. Unfortunately, we found our access restricted by an early throng of golfers. Keeping a respectful distance from the golfers, we

checked the ponds through our binoculars and could see numerous American Coots, several Ruddy Ducks, and hundreds of Great-tailed Grackles on the reeds and the surrounding greens, together with the odd Killdeer. We also watched a group of coyotes wander nonchalantly across the greens, threading between groups of golfers, and crossing the path in front of us.

Then as we skirted around the golf ponds, our secret weapon came into play. Jules's sharp and keen young eyes were spotting birds that we older folks missed in the vegetation. Early on, Jules spotted an odd sparrow that turned out to be a lone young male Lark Bunting in a weedy area by the road to the maintenance buildings. Even as we turned from feasting our eyes on this confiding bird, a single Black-necked Stilt (one of Jules' favorite birds of the day) circled low over us, beautifully etched against a clear blue sky. Another surprise was a Black-headed Grosbeak in a shrub between greens.

As we headed away from the greens we spotted our first Purple Martins (just back last week) and we saw many more through the morning. Walking the trail from the Hardy Wash north we had a wonderful view of a roosting Lesser Nighthawk on a bare branch several feet above the ground, and a few more that we flushed flew in low circles around us. Other highlights along the wash were a total of five Bullock's Orioles. Warblers included several Wilson's and Lucy's, and a couple of Orange-crowned. Flycatchers were scarce: we had one Phainopepla and a couple of Western Kingbirds and Olive-sided Flycatchers. We had hoped for a Vermilion Flycatcher in the general use area of the park but none showed. Raptors, too, were few. We had a Cooper's Hawk at our meeting point, two Turkey Vultures, and a Red-tailed Hawk at nest on one of the baseball field light towers but no Harris's Hawk.

We birded for seven hours, deciding to call it quits as the temperatures soared and the number of new birds per hour rapidly declined. In our last hour Jules spotted a Costa's Hummingbird, and our last new bird was a Eurasian Collared Dove (another of Jules's favorite birds of the day) at the southwest corner of the park. The Birdathon provided us a wonderful morning of birding, and we especially enjoyed taking our time to study and appreciate the birds and the habitats that they were in. While the golf greens, baseball field, and picnic area were filled with users, we did not encounter anyone else on the trails.

Our total species count for the day was **48**, which far exceeded our expectations. Attached is the full list of bird species for our Birdathon team, in first-observed/heard sequence and in taxonomic order following the IOU list and naming convention (see <http://worldbirdnames.org>).

TUCSON AUDUBON BIRDATHON 2008: GREEN DAY PACKERS TEAM TOTAL

No.	First-Observed/Heard Order	IOU Taxonomic Order
1	White-winged Dove	Gambel's Quail
2	Curve-billed Thrasher	Mallard
3	Lesser Nighthawk	Ruddy Duck
4	House Finch	Double-crested Cormorant
5	Gila Woodpecker	Turkey Vulture
6	Mourning Dove	Cooper's Hawk
7	Verdin	Red-tailed Hawk
8	Cactus Wren	American Coot
9	House Sparrow	Black-necked Stilt
10	Gambel's Quail	Killdeer
11	Bronzed Cowbird	Common Pigeon [Rock Pigeon]
12	Cooper's Hawk	Eurasian Collared Dove
13	Great-tailed Grackle	Mourning Dove
14	Ash-throated Flycatcher	White-winged Dove
15	Killdeer	Lesser Nighthawk
16	Ruddy Duck	White-throated Swift
17	American Coot	Black-chinned Hummingbird
18	European Starling	Costa's Hummingbird
19	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	Gila Woodpecker
20	Purple Martin	Gilded Flicker
21	Gilded Flicker	Olive-sided Flycatcher
22	Mallard	Western Kingbird
23	Black-necked Stilt	Ash-throated Flycatcher
24	Lark Bunting	Phainopepla
25	Double-crested Cormorant	Verdin
26	Western Kingbird	Tree Swallow
27	Black-headed Grosbeak	Purple Martin
28	Northern Mockingbird	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
29	Lucy's Warbler	Cactus Wren
30	Brown-headed Cowbird	Northern Mockingbird
31	Rock Pigeon	Curve-billed Thrasher
32	Tree Swallow	Common Starling [European Starling]
33	White-throated Swift	Lucy's Warbler
34	Wilson's Warbler	House Sparrow
35	White-crowned Sparrow	House Finch
36	Abert's Towhee	Orange-crowned Warbler
37	Northern Cardinal	Wilson's Warbler
38	Bullock's Oriole	Bullock's Oriole
39	Black-chinned Hummingbird	Bronzed Cowbird
40	Orange-crowned Warbler	Brown-headed Cowbird
41	Red-tailed Hawk	Great-tailed Grackle
42	Olive-sided Flycatcher	Lark Bunting
43	Pyrruloxia	White-crowned Sparrow
44	Phainopepla	Canyon Towhee
45	Costa's Hummingbird	Abert's Towhee
46	Turkey Vulture	Black-headed Grosbeak
47	Canyon Towhee	Northern Cardinal
48	Eurasian Collared-Dove	Pyrruloxia