

2020 Chiricahua Elegant Trogon Census – Sunday May 31, 2020

Due to special circumstances of the current health crisis **there will no in-person meetings before or after the survey.** Counters will be given all information online, via email or by phone. Once the survey is complete you will enter your data into our online form or send your data via email to Jennie and Rick.

There are recordings of several types of Elegant Trogon calls to help counters recognize trogon vocalizations posted at the Arizona IBA website: http://aziba.org/?page_id=1994 --if and when they hear them. (These calls will also be played at the meeting)

- The mp3 file beginning with **Koink** is the common call heard most often – it is likely a male advertising his territory or trying to attract a female. This certainly indicates you have a male but you cannot infer a pair from this call necessarily.
- The mp3 file beginning with **Kow** – you should listen to this one carefully – note the lack of space between each note, it is much more continuous than the Koink call. This does indicate a mated pair and I have sometimes heard both the male and female giving this call to each other. Her voice is considerably lower than his.
- The mp3 file beginning with **W-kkk** – this is an alarm call and it means the Trogons are distressed and you are likely very close to their nest. Back off immediately if you hear this sound. Wait a while and then cautiously try to find the nest if it is possible to do so without alarming the trogons.

Time zones: Be careful of time and be sure you are accurately recording the time of your sightings. The count areas are so close to New Mexico that your phone can change time zones without you realizing. You can either use a watch or lock your phone to Arizona time or temporarily disable the automatic time zone update feature of your smart phone.

Why time is so important: The time data for sightings let's us decide if teams are seeing the same bird or different birds. Such decisions help determine an irreducible minimum number of trogons using the Cave Creek-South Fork Canyon complex for this year. For example if one counter has a trogon calling at 8 a.m. up-canyon from his or her position and the next counter up-canyon has a trogon calling down-canyon at 8 a.m., the vocalizations are counted as representing a single trogon. There is a possibility that 2 or more trogons are involved--and females are invariably undercounted on this census--but the purpose is to arrive at the absolute minimum number of Elegant Trogons using the Cave Creek-S. Fork Canyon complex in any given summer.

Directions for the count: Counters are asked to take a position in the approximate center of their territory from 6-9 a.m., recording when they hear trogon vocalizations at 5 minute increments indicating location as down-canyon from their position, near the center of the territory, or up-canyon from the observer's position. If they can actually see the bird or birds, the counter records the sex(s) and number. After 9 a.m. counters are permitted to roam up and down the length of their canyon territory, recording the same data, trying to see the bird or birds they may have only heard earlier--or perhaps find a nest, until the census ends at 11 a.m. Please retreat from any trogons giving alarm vocalizations--the

call will be played at the organizational meeting--but do attempt to discover the actual nest cavity. In the unusual circumstance that an active nest is discovered, please describe the nest location as well as possible on the back of the census form. All counters are asked to return to their census form to the USFS Portal Information Station by noon if possible, regardless whether or not a trogon is detected in the counter's territory. Negative results are also essential to an accurate census.

Note: To arrive at the center of a territory, especially in South Fork Cave Creek, a counter may have to hike. This means the counter needs to depart for his or her territory with the appropriate amount of time to arrive by 6 a.m (or close to 6am).

Please remember to bring a pen or pencil on count day, as well as the census time form and the checklist of other bird species. The census is for the purpose of counting Elegant Trogons, but we are also interested in obtaining a list of other species occupying trogon breeding habitat, although the actual numbers of each of the other species is not required, it is nice to have. I think a good way to think of it is an “eBird quality” check list where gut check guesses of quantities are used – an educated guess of how many Western Wood-pewees you encountered is infinitely better than an X – but an X is acceptable if it makes you more comfortable.

Counters will also want to carry at least a quart of water and perhaps a few snacks to tide them through the morning. Absolutely no open fire and no smoking is permitted during the census. One and sometimes several Chiricahua volunteers encounter a black bear in their territory on the morning of the census every year. Never run from a bear. Yell at it and throw rocks if the bear tries to approach. If you leave a road or a trail, please watch very carefully where you step. Aside from tripping hazards, rattlesnakes may be active. There has never been a negative human-wildlife encounter in the 35 year history of the count, but all counters should be aware of the possibility.

Results are e-mailed to all participants, as well as all relevant conservation agencies to be factored into their management decisions. Thanks for your help with the Chiricahua Mountain Elegant Trogon Census!

--Rick Taylor and Jennie MacFarland