

## Atascosa Mountains Elegant Trogon Census

**Census Date:** Saturday May 16, 2020

**Census Time:** 6 to 11 a.m.

### **Pre-survey:**

Posted on the Arizona IBA webpage ([www.aziba.org](http://www.aziba.org)) are recordings of several types of Elegant Trogon calls to help counters recognize trogon vocalizations--if and when they hear them. Counters need to have a watch or a clock with them during the survey to fill out the time forms. If you are unable to print the attached forms, I will have additional copies available on the day of the survey. 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 an objective.

**Methodology:** Counters should plan on surveying the full length of their assigned canyon territory, usually within elevations from approximately 3,600' to approximately 4,200' between 6 a.m. and 11 a.m.. Most roads and trails in the Atascosa Mountains are in or near the canyon bottom riparian strands, precisely the habitat used most frequently by Elegant Trogons. Counters may work at any pace they choose, but obviously counters in longer canyons will need to cover more terrain in less time than counters in shorter canyons.

Where at all practical, counters should stay on designated trails/dirt roads. Provided the terrain is not too steep or rocky, forays off-trail for the purpose of sexing a calling trogon are permitted, but should be minimized. Do not leave the trail where the terrain is obviously treacherous.

The judicious use of play-backs of trogon calls is permitted. Counters are not, however, obligated to use playbacks. If a counter decides to use play-backs, recordings need only be used at 0.5 mile intervals, and only briefly. Males ordinarily patrol canyon territories about 0.5 miles in length and call relatively frequently in spring, especially early in the morning. If a male is already calling it is unnecessary to use a mechanical playback. The purpose of a playback is only to elicit a response, not to draw the bird closer to the counter. If there is a response call, counters should try to approach close enough for a visual observation. Counters should try to sex the bird or birds (males have iridescent green backs and females are a more neutral olive-brown), and determine whether one, two, or more individuals are involved. Pairs may be calling to one another. Territorial skirmishes among males are also relatively common in May and June. Occasionally a female is also present at these disputes. Female trogons call much less frequently than a male, which makes them more difficult to detect. They are most apt to vocalize when accompanied by a male. Although the female trogon's voice is typically deeper pitched or more hoarse sounding than the male's, for the purposes of this survey, no trogon should be sexed without a direct visual observation.

If a nest is discovered please withdraw to at least 75 feet from the nest tree. Agitated birds emit a sharp "wk-k-k-k" call and usually elevate their tail. This is often a sign that the observer is too near a nest. Although fledglings are rare this early, parent trogons exhibit much the same behavior. Once again, please withdraw 75' from the trogon(s).

**Data Collection:** A census form is being sent as a separate attachment. Record the start and end time of each observation. Trogons that are heard only should be noted as such using the letter "H" in the correct time cell. Please record the sex and number of any seen trogons—but please do not assign a gender to an unseen trogon. Using approximate mileage from the starting point and approximate elevation, please describe the relative position of the trogon in the canyon. Additionally, counters with GPS devices may record the coordinates of their observations. Do not, however, neglect to include mileage and elevation estimates. (or if you have a GPS unit, the UTM Nad 83 locations of a Trogon territory or nest) Also note that many 'smart phones' are capable of telling you your position in UTM's using one of many gps apps.

Using distance and direction from a fixed reference point, as well as elevation, also describe as well as possible the location of any active trogon nest or nests (use the back of the form if necessary). Nest descriptions should include species of tree if known (e.g. sycamore, oak, pine), overall height of the tree, position on the tree (trunk or limb, dead or living wood, etc.), and approximate height of the cavity above the ground—as well as any other details that would enable the nest to be refound.

If no Elegant Trogons are detected in your assigned canyon, please note that fact at the bottom of the census form. Do not forget to write your name and assigned canyon on your data sheet before submitting it. Please include your telephone number and an e-mail address. All data sheets should be dropped off with at the designated collection point. Counters in remote canyons may not be able to submit their census forms by noon. Those counters should telephone Jennie MacFarland at (520-360-2213) as soon as they can obtain a phone signal and report their results and status.

**Data Collection:** We are not meeting after the survey and strictly following social distancing rules. You will enter your data using an online form or you can email Jennie a copy of your datasheet.

**Results:** Results will be summarized and posted on the internet on the AZ/NMbirds site and posted on the AZIBA.org website. All participants with e-mail will also receive the results summary. Results are also forwarded to the Arizona Game & Fish Department, the Coronado National Forest, the land management agencies that administer the areas within the census zone.

**Safety:** Each person, whether "officially" counting Elegant Trogons or not, should bring at least three pints of safe drinking water with them. Do not drink from springs or streams. Bring a snack or picnic lunch. Unless a doctor has ordered you to limit your consumption of salts, be sure to bring some item containing salt (e.g. salted nuts or chips, etc.). Do not leave roads or trails except for the purposes described above. If any illegal aliens, hunters, birdwatchers, or other recreationalists are encountered, courteously limit the interaction to the briefest possible time. For your own safety, do not confront anyone engaged in any activity you perceive as unlawful. Discontinue the Elegant Trogon census and report the possible criminal infraction to officials. In the unlikely event that a Mountain Lion or Black Bear is sighted, make enough noise to alert the animal to your presence. If the animal approaches make louder noises and wave your arms. Do not run or try to climb a tree. Only some areas of the Atascosa Mountains have cell phone reception, but as a safety precaution it is suggested that you bring a cell phone with you during the census.

If you have registered to participate in the Atascosa Mountains Elegant Trogon Census and you fail to turn in your data, we will suspect that you have had an accident. Please call us (520) 360-2213 when you have a signal if you are running late so we know that you are safe. Counters who know in advance they may be delayed submitting their data should inform Jennie MacFarland before the count and call in their results when they can.