

Salt and Verde Riparian Ecosystem

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| IBA web pages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - http://www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas/salt-and-verde-riparian-ecosystem - http://aziba.org/?page_id=953 |
| Priority | State |
| Qualifying Criteria | <p>D1: Site important to special status avian species (Bald Eagle – southwest population)</p> <p>D3: Rare, Unique, or Exceptional Representative Habitat/Ecological Community (<i>low-elevation riparian</i>)</p> <p>D4vii: Important migratory stop-over/seasonal concentration for migratory land birds (Lucy’s Warbler, Common Black Hawk, Summer Tanager, Bullock’s Oriole, Hooded Oriole, Gilded Flicker, Bell’s Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Abert’s Towhee, Great Blue Heron, Cactus Wren, Rock Wren, Canyon Wren, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Bendire’s Thrasher, Curve-billed Thrasher, Phainopepla, Canyon Towhee, Black-throated Sparrow, Yellow-headed Blackbird)</p> |
| IBA Polygon Center Point (Latitude, Longitude) | 33.30°N 111.42°W |
| Size | 20,435 acres |
| County | Maricopa, Yavapai, Gila |
| Local Communities | Mesa, Fountain Hills (Salt River) and Camp Verde (Verde River) |
| Description | <p>This IBA is comprised of sections of two large rivers that come together just east of Phoenix, the Salt and the Verde, as well as a major tributary of the Verde, Fossil Creek. The Salt River section extends from Saguaro Lake's Stewart Mountain Dam, along the riparian corridor of the Salt River west to the confluence with the Verde River. The Verde River section is the riparian corridor from the Childs power plant to its confluence with the Salt River and also includes 16.8 miles of Fossil Creek from its confluence with the Verde to the confluence of Sand Rock and Calf Pen canyons.</p> <p>The northern most 15 miles of the Verde contained in this IBA have been designated as a "Wild", under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. This stretch of river is within the large designated U.S. Forest Service Mazatzal Wilderness, the largest forest Wilderness in Arizona. Fossil Creek has also received designation under the act with 9.3 miles recognized as "Wild" and 7.5 miles with "Recreational" status.</p> <p>The Bartlett and Horseshoe Reservoirs (part of the Verde River), are operated by the Salt River Project, Inc. Maricopa Audubon Society conducts the Salt and Verde River Christmas Bird Count that includes a portion of this IBA. Information about how to volunteer</p> |

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| | through Maricopa Audubon Society is available at their web site: http://www.maricopaaudubon.org/volunteer.htm |
| Mission/Goals | To support and protect a significant example of low-elevation riparian habitat and the populations of wintering, breeding, migratory, and resident birds that depend on it, including state species of conservation concern. |
| Current Habitat Conservation, Planning, and Management Activities | The Arizona Game and Fish Department and the U.S. Forest Service have a Bald Eagle nestwatch program and implement seasonal closures to the public during the eagle nesting period. Seasonal off-highway vehicle patrols and public awareness campaigns sponsored by both agencies and the Maricopa County Sheriff are efforts to stem the impacts of off-trail vehicle use. In addition, the Maricopa Audubon Society conducts the Salt and Verde River Christmas Bird Count that includes a portion of this IBA. |
| Land Cover Type ¹ (%) and Associated Priority ² Birds ¹ Southwest Regional Gap Analysis modified to align with ABBA/SWAP habitat types ² AGFD SGCN and IBA Qualifying Species | <p>56.32 Riparian (<i>Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Summer Tanager, Yellow Warbler, Abert's Towhee, American Bittern, Bald Eagle, Bell's Vireo, Bullock's Oriole, Common Black Hawk, Curve-billed Thrasher, Gila Woodpecker, Great Blue Heron, Hooded Oriole, Lincoln's Sparrow, Lucy's Warbler, Peregrine Falcon, Phainopepla, Yellow-headed Blackbird</i>)</p> <p>27.77 Sonoran Desertscrub: Uplands (<i>Bendire's Thrasher, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Black-throated Sparrow, Cactus Wren, Canyon Towhee, Curve-billed Thrasher, Gila Woodpecker, Gilded Flicker, Phainopepla, Rock Wren</i>)</p> <p>6.08 Semiarid/Sonoran Savannah Grassland (<i>Bendire's Thrasher, Black-throated Sparrow, Cactus Wren, Canyon Towhee, Curve-billed Thrasher, Gila Woodpecker, Golden Eagle, Savannah Sparrow, Western Burrowing Owl</i>)</p> <p>2.67 Pinyon Pine Juniper Woodland (<i>Golden Eagle</i>)</p> <p>2.63 Sonoran Desertscrub: Lower Colorado River</p> <p>2.10 Interior Chaparral</p> <p>2.42 Other (Sonoran/Mohave Desertscrub, Mohave Desertscrub, Madrean Pine-Oak Woodland, Urban/Residential, Rock) (<i>Abert's Towhee, Bendire's Thrasher, Canyon Wren, Cactus Wren, Curve-billed Thrasher, Gila Woodpecker, Phainopepla, Rock Wren</i>)</p> |
| Related Habitat Accounts* | Lowland Riparian Sonoran Desert |
| Biological Description | Fremont Cottonwood/Goodding's Willow/Arizona Ash are the dominant riparian species present in the floodplain habitat type. Velvet mesquite, saguaro, blue palo verde, foothills palo verde, and |

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| | <p>ironwood are the dominant trees of the uplands (in the lower section). At the northern reach of the Verde River, the riparian habitat is composed of Sycamore, Arizona Ash, Arizona Walnut, and Arizona Alder.</p> <p>This IBA contains about approximately 1/3 of all Bald Eagle nest areas in the state of Arizona (13 out of 42 in 2003). Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, both federally protected species, nest within the IBA. In addition, Common Black Hawk, Lucy’s Warbler, and Abert’s Towhee, all species of conservation status, are known to occur.</p> <p>Much more ornithological work needs to be accomplished to fully document the species of conservation status who have breeding, wintering, or migratory populations in this mostly remote and large federal wilderness-containing IBA.</p> |
| <p>Focal Bird Species</p> | <p><u>IBA Qualifying Species</u></p> <p>State: Bald Eagle, Lucy’s Warbler, Common Black Hawk, Summer Tanager, Bullock’s Oriole, Hooded Oriole, Gilded Flicker, Bell’s Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Abert’s Towhee, Great Blue Heron, Cactus Wren, Rock Wren, Canyon Wren, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Bendire’s Thrasher, Curve-billed Thrasher, Phainopepla, Canyon Towhee, Black- throated Sparrow, Yellow-headed Blackbird</p> <p><u>AGFD Species of Greatest Conservation Need</u></p> <p>Tier A: Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle</p> <p>Tier B: Golden Eagle, Western Burrowing Owl, American Bittern, Gilded Flicker, Yellow Warbler, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Gila Woodpecker, Savannah Sparrow, Abert’s Towhee, Bell’s Vireo</p> <p><u>Federal Threatened or Endangered Species</u></p> <p>Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher</p> <p><u>USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern</u></p> <p>National – Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo,</p> <p>USFWS Region – Bald Eagle, Common Black Hawk, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Western Burrowing Owl, Costa’s Hummingbird, Gilded Flicker, Loggerhead</p> |

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| | Shrike, Bell's Vireo, Bendire's Thrasher, Lucy's Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Costa's Hummingbird, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, Bell's Vireo, Bbendire's Thrasher, Lucy's Warbler, |
| NABCI Bird Conservation Region | 33: Sonoran and Mohave Deserts 34: Sierra Madre Occidental |
| Ownership | The 12-mile Salt River arm is located entirely within the Tonto National Forest, except the last 3 miles (downstream), which are bounded on the north side by the Salt River Indian Reservation. The upper 64 miles of the Verde River are within the Tonto National Forest (except for the upper most 3 miles, on the east side, which are Coconino National Forest lands). Downstream from the National Forest, the river passes through the Fort McDowell Indian Reservation (11 miles), and the Salt River Indian Reservation (southern-most 3 miles). |
| Conservation Land Status** | 74 river miles of this IBA are on National Forest Land – both the Tonto and Coconino National Forests. The Upper 15 miles of the Verde River have “Wild and Scenic” designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. This stretch of river is within the Mazatzal Wilderness – the largest forest Wilderness in Arizona. |
| Human Population Density | Rural |
| Legislative District(s) | Arizona Congressional Districts 4 and 6 and State Legislative Districts 23 and 26 |
| NRCS Major Land Resource Area | 52: Sonoran Basin and Range 50: Mogollon Transition |
| Visitation, main access, and permits needed | For information on Salt River access, visit the Tonto National Forest's Website: https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/tonto/passes-permits/recreation For information about Verde River access, visit the Coconino National Forest's website: https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/coconino/recarea/?recid=70863 |

*References available written narratives (located on the SJV website) for general habitat types occurring within the IBA.

**Identifies whether the IBA or portions of the IBA have a special land management designation such as: wilderness, primitive area, wildlife area, refuge, park, monument, designated conservation area, conservation easement, or other similar designation

IBA Activities:

| Issue or Activity | Priority | Description | Actions |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--|--|
| CBC | H | Salt and Verde Rivers CBC | Extract CBC data that is in the IBA |
| AZ IBA Surveys | L | Use eBird and Bald Eagle monitoring | Encourage eBird entries |
| IBA Signage | H | Install signs identifying the site as an IBA | Partial – Coordinate with USFS Audubon AZ lead |
| IBA Dedication | Done | A formal recognition event | |

Partners:

| Name | Role(s) | Contact Information | Actions |
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| Tonto National Forest | Land Manager | | Coordinate with Land Plan and IBA identification |
| Arizona Game and Fish Department | Bald Eagle Nestwatch Program | http://www.azgfd.gov/w_c/nongameandendangeredwildlifeprogram/Raptors/ArizonaBaldEagleNestwatchProgram.shtml | Annual monitoring of nesting Bald Eagles |
| Maricopa Audubon Society | Christmas Bird Count lead | http://sonoranaudubon.org/ | Lead annual Salt/Verde Christmas bird count which includes a portion of this IBA |
| Fort McDowell Yavapai-Apache | Tribal Land | Environmental Department 480.789.7163 mfrank@fmyn.org | Invite to be included in the IBA |
| Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community | Tribal Land | Environmental Protection & Natural Resources 10005 E. Osborn Rd., Scottsdale, AZ 85256 480.362.7740 | Invite to be included in the IBA |

Conservation Targets:

These are species, communities, or ecological systems that represent and encompass the full array of biodiversity found in this IBA.

| Conservation Target | Current Condition |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Bald Eagle | Good |
| Desert Birds | Good |
| Riparian Birds | Good |

Conservation Challenges:

Conservation challenges are primarily human activities that immediately affect what we are trying to conserve. Through a Miradi process, it was found that pose the greatest threats to birds within this IBA.

| Challenges | Desert Birds | Riparian Birds | Bald Eagle | Summary Rating |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Altered Water Regime (Dams) | NA | High | Medium | Medium |
| Grazing (Livestock and Horses) | Medium | Medium | Low | Medium |
| OHV Impacts | Low | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| Disturbance to Birds (Boats) | NA | Low | Low | Low |
| Invasive plants (tamarisk, bufflegrass, mustards) | High | High | Medium | High |
| Summary Ratings: | Low | High | Medium | Medium |

| Salt and Verde Riparian Ecosystem | | Severity (1-3) | Scope (1-3) | Permanence (2-4) | Immediacy (Optional 1-2) |
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| Threats on National Database | | | | | |
| Grazing | 7 | 2 | 2 | 3 | |
| Disturbance to birds | Boats 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | |
| Recreation/tourism Off-road v | 5 | 1 | 2 | 2 | |
| Water Diversions (incl. impact dikes/dams) | 7 | 1 | 2 | 4 | |