

Sonoita Creek State Natural Area/Patagonia Lake

IBA web pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas/sonoita-creek-state-natural-area-patagonia-lake • http://aziba.org/?page_id=569 • AzGFD Conservation Opportunity Area
Priority	State
Qualifying Criteria	<p>Site Important to Special Status Avian Species (<i>Gray Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, Common Black Hawk, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Bell’s Vireo, Lucy’s Warbler, Abert’s Towhee, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Varied Bunting, Common Black-Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, Yellow Warbler, Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Elegant Trogon</i>)</p> <p>Site important to significant concentrations of waterbirds including grebes, cormorants, and marshbirds (<i>Double-crested Cormorant, Neotropical Cormorant, Pied-billed Grebe, Eared Grebe, Virginia’s Rail, Sora, Common Moorhen</i>)</p> <p>eBird Bar Chart https://ebird.org/barchart?byr=1900&eyr=2024&bmo=1&em=12&r=US-AZ_2298</p>
IBA Polygon Center Point (Latitude, Longitude)	31.49° N, 110.86° W
Size	3,497 acres
County	Santa Cruz
Local Communities	Patagonia, Nogales
Description	<p>The Sonoita Creek State Natural Area/Patagonia Lake IBA includes Patagonia lake and roughly 13.3km of Sonoita Creek – 11.3km downstream below of the lake and 2km upstream to the boundary with Circle Z Ranch.</p> <p>Sonoita Creek is boarded by lush broadleaf riparian vegetation (cottonwood, willow, ash, sycamore) with an upland terrace of mesquite bosque. The uplands of Sonoita Creek SNA are covered with high desert vegetation including mesquite, acacia, ocotillo, barrel and other smaller cactus, and yucca. Within these uplands, Coal Mine Springs is an oasis of perennial water, ringed by wetland and mesic-riparian vegetation including cottonwood, Arizona ash, and netleaf hackberry. Patagonia Lake is bordered by wetland and riparian habitat comprised of cattails, bulrush, and willow.</p>

	There are 26 recorded cultural resource sites located within the Natural Area that all have an Arizona State Museum Site Number associated with them. These sites range from a Hohokam field house to the historic New Mexico and Arizona railroad grade.
Mission/Goals	To conserve and protect an exceptional example of low-elevation riparian habitat and the special status avian species that depend on it.
Current Habitat Conservation, Planning, and Management Activities	Efforts, including the construction of a perimeter fence, have been made to exclude cattle grazing from the State Natural Area. In addition, the Arizona Game and Fish Department works to manage the numbers of non-native fish, crayfish, and amphibians.
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>57.63 Semiarid/Sonoran Savannah Grassland (<i>Golden Eagle, Gould's Turkey, Grasshopper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Botteri's Sparrow, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Azure Bluebird</i>)</p> <p>30.22 Riparian and Open Water (<i>Gray Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, Common Black Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Bell's Vireo, Lucy's Warbler, Abert's Towhee, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Varied Bunting, Common Black-Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, Yellow Warbler, Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Elegant Trogon, Double-crested Cormorant, Neotropic Cormorant, Pied-billed Grebe, Eared Grebe, American Bittern, Virginia Rail, Sora, Common Moorhen, Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Violet-crowned Hummingbird, Lincoln's Sparrow, Gila Woodpecker, Desert Purple Martin, Thick-billed Kingbird</i>)</p> <p>4.89 Chihuahuan Desertscrub (<i>Golden Eagle, Gila Woodpecker</i>)</p> <p>2.29 Wash</p> <p>2.18 Urban/Residential (<i>Abert's Towhee, Gila Woodpecker</i>)</p> <p>1.86 Sonoran Desertscrub: Uplands (<i>Golden Eagle, Gilded Flicker, Gila Woodpecker, Desert Purple Martin</i>)</p> <p>0.93 Other (Mexican Evergreen Woodland, Rock, Mesquite, Pinyon Pine-Juniper Woodland) (<i>Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Bell's Vireo, Lucy's Warbler</i>)</p>
Related Habitat Accounts*	Low Grassland Lowland Riparian Sonoran Desert
Biological Description	This IBA has been identified because of its importance to riparian obligate avian species in southern Arizona. Most noteworthy are the regionally significant breeding populations of species of conservation concern including Gray Hawk, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Bell's Vireo, Lucy's Warbler, Abert's Towhee, and Broad-billed Hummingbird. Yellow-breasted Chat also nest in great abundance.

	<p>Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet and Varied Bunting, both special status species, are also present with smaller breeding populations. In addition, two very rare nesting raptor species in southern Arizona, the Common Black-Hawk and the Zone-tailed Hawk have regularly nested in the IBA. This riparian oasis is also a migration hot-spot for foraging riparian dependent species, notably, Summer Tanager, Yellow Warbler, and Lucy’s Warbler. A few rare species in Arizona, at the northern limits of their range distribution, also periodically occur along Sonoita Creek, including: Green Kingfisher (nesting), Black-capped Gnatcatcher (nesting), Elegant Trogon (over-wintering), and Rufous-backed Robin (over-wintering). Golden Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, Zone-tailed Hawks, and Northern Harriers (winter months) forage over the uplands of the IBA, while American Kestrels and Loggerhead Shrikes nest in abundance within this habitat. Sharp-shinned Hawks routinely over-winter in the riparian zone.</p> <p>Patagonia Lake supports a significant wintering Waterbird concentration including Neotropic and Double-crested Cormorant, Pied-billed and Eared Grebe, Virginia Rail, Sora, and Common Moorhen. Around its margins, Patagonia Lake contains rare and therefore important marsh habitat that supports rare wintering species such as the Marsh Wren and Swamp Sparrow.</p> <p>Also using this marsh habitat year-round in very large numbers are nesting and wintering Red-winged Blackbirds, joined by substantial numbers of Brewer’s and Yellow-headed Blackbirds during the migration and winter periods. Great Blue Heron is also particularly abundant along the lake’s margin in winter, and nests nearby along Sonoita Creek. Least Bittern have been noted nesting at Patagonia Lake. One or two Bald Eagles are routinely present during the winter months, and occasionally the lake hosts individuals or small groups of birds that have strayed from the Pacific flyway, including more regularly Common Loon and Brown Pelican. In addition, there are 22 animal species that have been given special status by the USFWS that potentially occur within the Natural Area. Non avian species include Desert Pupfish, Gila Topminnow, Lesser Long-nosed Bat, Ocelot, Jaguar, Huachuca Tiger Salamander, Sonora Chub, Huachuca Spring Snail, Chiricahua Leopard Frog, Desert Sucker, Longfin Dace, Speckled Dace, Cave Myotis, and Long-tongued Bat.</p>
<p>Focal Bird Species</p> <p>Bold Type are Road to Recovery species</p>	<p><u>AGFD Species of Greatest Conservation Need (2022)</u></p> <p>Tier 1: Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo</p> <p>Tier 2: Abert’s Towhee, American Bittern, American Kestrel, Arizona Botteri’s Sparrow, Arizona Woodpecker, Azure Bluebird, Arizona Woodpecker, Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Black-chinned Sparrow, Brewer’s Blackbird (winter), Broad-billed Hummingbird,</p>

	<p>Bullock’s Oriole, Cactus Wren, Canyon Towhee, Common Black Hawk, Desert Purple Martin, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Elegant Trogon, Grasshopper Sparrow, Inca Dove, Golden Eagle, Gilded Flicker, Gould’s Turkey, Gila Woodpecker, Gilded Flicker, Hermit Thrush (migration), Hooded Oriole, Killdeer, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, MacGillivray’s Warbler (migration), Northern Beardless Tyrannulet, Olive-sided Flycatcher (migration) Pacific Wren, Pyrrhuloxia, Red-winged Blackbird, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow (winter), Scott’s Oriole, Thick-billed Kingbird, Verdin, Vesper Sparrow (winter), Violet-crowned Hummingbird, Western Screech Owl, Yellow Warbler</p> <p><u>Federal Threatened or Endangered Species</u></p> <p>Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo</p> <p><u>USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern</u></p> <p>National – Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Loggerhead Shrike, Bell’s Vireo, Lucy’s Warbler, Varied Bunting</p> <p>USFWS Region – Bald Eagle, Common Black-Hawk, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Burrowing Owl, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Loggerhead Shrike, Bell’s Vireo, Lucy’s Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Botteri’s Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Varied Bunting</p>
NABCI Bird Conservation Region	34: Sierra Madre Occidental
Ownership	Arizona State Parks & State Trust
Conservation Land Status**	State Natural Area
Human Population Density	Rural
Legislative District(s)	Arizona Congressional District 7 and State Legislative District 21
NRCS Major Land Resource Area	53: Southeastern Arizona Basin and Range
Visitation: access fees, and permits needed for Sonoita Creek Natural Area and camping	<p>For more information about accessing this IBA, please visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patagonia Lake - - https://azstateparks.com/patagonia-lake/

*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	M	IBA is within the Nogales CBC	Extract IBA data from CBC
AZ IBA Surveys	H	Encourage eBird entries	TAS lead
IBA Signage	M	IBA signs identifying the site as an IBA posted at entrance of state park	Updated sign needed – TAS lead
Restoration	M	Habitat improvement needed due to cattle damage to riparian area	Ongoing TAS advocacy for funds to fix the damaged fence allowing cattle to enter.
IBA Dedication	Done	A formal recognition event	Recognition in 2007

Partners:

Name	Role(s)	Contact Information	Actions
Patagonia Lake State Park	Site manager	400 Patagonia Lake Road Patagonia, AZ 85624 (520) 287-6935	Public access and trails management Watercraft rules and enforcement with AGFD.
Tucson Audubon Society	IBA Steward	300 E University Blvd # 120, Tucson, AZ 85705 (520) 629-0510 tucsonaudubon.org/	Bird surveys, and advocacy
Friends of Sonoita Creek	Watershed Steward	P.O. Box 4508 Rio Rico, AZ 85648 (520) 394-0173 sonoitacreek.org/	Volunteers, watershed projects, and local advocacy for the watershed

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
Semi-arid Grassland Birds	Good
Open Water and Marsh Birds	Very Good
Riparian Birds	Very 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	Semi-arid Grassland Birds	Open Water and Marsh Birds	Riparian Birds	Summary Rating
Invasive Species	Medium	Low	Medium	Low
Drought	Medium	Low	High	Medium
Grazing	Medium	Low	High	Medium
Wild Fire	Low	Low	High	Medium
Summary Ratings:	Medium	low	Medium	Medium

31) Sonoita Creek SNA/Patagonia Lake				Severity (1-3)	Scope (1-3)	Permanence (2-4)
Threats on National Database						
Invasive species	Non-native plants, animals	6		1	2	3
Forest Grazing		6		2	2	2
Natural Events	Fire, Drought	7		3	2	2

Sonolita Creek State Natural Area / Patagonia Lake Important Bird Area

