

Upper Little Colorado River Watershed

IBA web pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://aziba.org/?page_id=648 • NAS Site 2291 • AzGFD Conservation Opportunity Areas
Priority	State
Qualifying Criteria	<p>Site Important to Special Status Avian Species (Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Northern Goshawk, Mexican Spotted Owl, Peregrine Falcon, Gray Catbird, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, MacGillivray’s Warbler)</p> <p>Rare, Unique, or Exceptional Representative Habitat/Ecological Community (Riparian)</p> <p>eBird Barchart: https://ebird.org/barchart?byr=1900&eyr=2024&bmo=1&emo=12&r=US-AZ_2291</p>
IBA Polygon Center Point (Latitude, Longitude)	-109.507900, 33.959700
Size	61,360 acres
County	Apache
Local Communities	Eager, Springerville, Pinetop-Lakeside
Description	<p>This IBA encompasses approximately 27 miles of the Little Colorado River (LCR) from its headwaters on Mount Baldy flowing northeast to the 355-acre Wenima Wildlife Area and includes the tributaries of Hall Creek, Benny Creek, Rosy Creek, Butler Canyon, the East Fork of the LCR, the West Fork of the LCR, and the South Fork of the LCR. The IBA also includes some adjoining uplands where known Mexican Spotted Owl and Northern Goshawk territories exist. Several lakes and reservoirs are included in the watershed and are within the IBA. They include Lee Valley Reservoir, White Mountain Reservoir, River Reservoir, Tunnel Reservoir, Bunch Reservoir, and Becker Lake.</p>
Mission/Goals	Conservation of an exceptional example of riparian habitat and the populations of birds of conservation concern that depend on it.
Current Habitat Conservation, Planning, and Management Activities	<p>Land uses are many and include: forestry management, nature and wildlife conservation, livestock, grazing, water supply, recreation, hunting and fishing, suburban development, and undeveloped lands. The Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) recently (2003) purchased a tract of land (Enders) along the LCR in Springerville near the existing AZGFD lands at Becker Lake, and is beginning a project to help restore the streambed and riparian vegetation.</p>



<p>Land Cover Type¹ (%) and Associated Priority² Birds</p> <p>¹Southwest Regional Gap Analysis modified to align with ABBA/SWAP habitat types</p> <p>²AGFD SGCN and IBA Qualifying Species</p>	<p>28.46 Ponderosa pine forest (<i>Mexican Spotted Owl, Northern Goshawk, Evening Grosbeak</i>)</p> <p>18.81 Cold-temperate (Great Basin) plains grassland (<i>Peregrine Falcon, Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Common Nighthawk, Mountain Plover, Savannah Sparrow</i>)</p> <p>10.00 Montane Meadow/Subalpine Grassland (<i>Peregrine Falcon, Golden Eagle, Ferruginous Hawk, Common Nighthawk, Mountain Plover, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow</i>)</p> <p>9.20 Subalpine spruce-fir forest (<i>Mexican Spotted Owl, Northern Goshawk, Swainson’s Thrush, Evening Grosbeak, Dusky Grouse, Gray Jay, Pine Grosbeak</i>)</p> <p>7.64 Riparian (<i>Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Mexican Spotted Owl, Northern Goshawk, Bald Eagle, Swainson’s Thrush, American Dipper, Gray Catbird, Magnificent Hummingbird, Lincoln’s Sparrow, MacGillivray’s Warbler</i>)</p> <p>7.18 Ponderosa pine-Gambel’s oak forest (<i>Northern Goshawk, Evening Grosbeak, Dusky Grouse, Magnificent Hummingbird</i>)</p> <p>7.03 Pinyon pine-juniper woodland (<i>Peregrine Falcon, Golden Eagle, Common Nighthawk, Pinyon Jay</i>)</p> <p>6.68 Aspen forest (<i>Evening Grosbeak, Dusky Grouse, Gray Jay,</i></p> <p>3.80 Mixed-conifer forest (<i>Mexican Spotted Owl, Northern Goshawk, Evening Grosbeak, Dusky Grouse, Magnificent Hummingbird</i>)</p> <p>1.20 Other (Wash, Rock, Urban/Residential, Subalpine Scrub, Cold Temperate/Great Basin Desertscrub)</p>
<p>Related Habitat Accounts*</p>	<p>High Grassland Pine Conifer Forest Montane Riparian Cold Desertscrub</p>
<p>Biological Description</p>	<p>This riparian corridor contains a significant amount of intact, diverse, high elevation habitat. It supports a diversity of breeding species, many of which nest only in the high elevations in Arizona.</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: American Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Mexican Spotted Owl, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo</p> <p>Tier 2: American Bittern, American Dipper, American Goshawk, American Kestrel, American Pipit, Band-tailed Pigeon, Black-chinned Sparrow, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Black-throated Sparrow, Brewer’s Blackbird, Brewer’s Sparrow, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Bullock’s Oriole, Canada Jay, Canyon Towhee, Cassin’s Finch, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Clark’s Grebe, Common Nighthawk, Dusky Grouse, Evening Grosbeak, (Migration), Ferruginous Hawk, Flammulated Owl, Golden Eagle, Grace’s Warbler, Hermit Thrush, Hooded Oriole, Horned Lark, Killdeer, Lark Bunting, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Lewis’s Woodpecker, Loggerhead Shrike, MacGillivray’s Warbler, Mountain Chickadee, Mountain Plover, Mountain West White-crowned Sparrow, Northern Harrier, Northern Pygmy Owl, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Pacific Wren, Pine Grosbeak, Pinyon Jay, Prairie Falcon, Red-faced Warbler, Red-winged Blackbird, Rivoli’s Hummingbird, Sage Thrasher, Savannah Sparrow, Scott’s Oriole, Steller’s Jay, Swainson’s Thrush, Swainson’s Hawk, Thick-billed Longspur, Townsend’s Solitaire, Verdin, Vesper Sparrow, Western Grasshopper Sparrow, Western Burrowing Owl, Western Grebe, Western Screech Owl, Western Wood-pewee, Woodhouse’s Scrub-jay</p> <p><u>Federal Threatened or Endangered Species</u></p> <p>Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Mexican Spotted Owl</p> <p><u>USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern</u></p> <p>National – Bald Eagle, Mountain Plover, Mexican Spotted Owl, Lewis’s Woodpecker, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Virginia’s Warbler, Grace’s Warbler, Red-faced Warbler,</p> <p>USFWS Region – Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Mountain Plover, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Lewis’s Woodpecker, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Pinyon Jay, Grace’s Warbler, Red-faced Warbler</p>
<p>NABCI Bird Conservation Region</p>	<p>I6: Southern Rockies/Colorado Plateau</p>
<p>Ownership</p>	<p>Land Ownership is shared between Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest, Arizona Game and Fish, Private Land and State Trust Land.</p>
<p>Conservation Land Status**</p>	<p>The IBA includes several protected areas including the Becker Lake</p>

	Wildlife Area, Wenima Wildlife Area, and Mount Baldy Wilderness.
Human Population Density	Rural
Legislative District(s)	Arizona Congressional District 2 and State Legislative District 6
NRCS Major Land Resource Area	35: Colorado Plateau 39: Arizona and New Mexico Mountains
Visitation, main access, and permits needed	<p>Winema Wildlife Area: At the junction of U.S. Highways 60 and 180/191, go a quarter-mile north on Highway 180/191 and look to turn right onto a graded dirt road going northeast. After 1.5 miles, the road drops a short distance into the Little Colorado River canyon corridor.</p> <p>Becker Lake Wildlife Area: There are three public access points. The Lakeview Trail and Becker Lake access is two miles west of the traffic light in Springerville on U.S. Highway 60; turn south into the main Becker Lake area, designated with signage. The River Walk Trail access is one mile west of the traffic light on Highway 60; turn south into the parking area just before crossing the bridge over the Little Colorado River. The River Walk Trail can also be accessed off Airport Road. Parking is at designated sites only and the wildlife area is open from sunrise to sunset.</p>

*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
Mexican Spotted Owl	M	USFS surveys	See if enough PACs for global IBA
Bird Monitoring	M	eBird and AZFO expedition, possibly BOR's forest bird data?	Need to see about acquiring BOR's forest bird data
IBA Signage	M	Small IBA given to USFS	Follow-up and signs at WAs
IBA Dedication	Completed	Formal dedication	2008 at Sipe's White Mountain Wildlife Area
Updated	July 2016		

Partners:

Name	Role(s)	Contact Information	Actions
Arizona Game	Land Manager	Pinetop Regional Office	Management of Becker Lake and

Name	Role(s)	Contact Information	Actions
and Fish Department		(928) 367-4281	Winema Wildlife Areas
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest	Land Manager	Contact Information	Timber, grazing, and recreation management.
White Mountains Audubon	IBA Steward	Web Site: http://www.whitemountainaudubon.org/	Attends northeastern Arizona ABCI meetings

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
Grassland Birds	Good
Montane and Subalpine Grasslands Birds	Good
Mixed Conifer and Spruce-Fir Birds	Good
Riparian Birds	Fair
Ponderosa Pine Birds	Good
Open Water Birds	Good
Pinyon and Juniper 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 drought, overbrowsing by elk, water diversions, and wildfire pose the greatest threats to birds within this IBA.

Challenges	Open Water Birds	Ponderosa Pine Birds	Montane and Subalpine Grassland Birds	Pinyon and Juniper Birds	High Elevation Riparian Birds	Mixed Conifer and Spruce/Fir Forest Birds	Summary Rating
Overbrowsing by Elk	NA	Low	NA	NA	High	Low	Medium
Invasive Species Tamarisk	Low	NA	NA	NA	Medium	NA	Low
Invasive Species Crayfish	Low	NA	NA	NA	Medium	NA	Low
Off Road Vehicles	NA	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Water Diversions	High	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Medium
Drought	Medium	High	Very High	Low	High	High	Very High
Overgrazing	Low	Low	High	Low	High	Medium	Medium
Wild Fire		High		Medium		High	High
Summary Ratings:	Medium	High	High	Low	High	High	High

37) Upper Little Colorado River Watershed				Severity (1-3)	Scope (1-3)	Permanence (2-4)
Threats on National Database				-		
Forest Grazing	Overbrowsing riparian trees		5	1	2	2
Invasive species	Non-native animals (Crayfish)		6	2	2	2
Invasive species	Non-native plants (Tamarisk)		6	2	2	2
Recreation/Tourism	Off-road vehicles		5	2	1	2
Water Diversions	Water Level Changes		8	3	3	2

Upper Little Colorado River Watershed Important Bird Area

