

Agua Fria National Monument Riparian Corridors

IBA web pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://aziba.org/?page_id=727 • NAS Site 899 • AzGFD Conservation Opportunity Area
Priority	State
Qualifying Criteria	<p>State</p> <p>Site Important to Special Status Avian Species (<i>Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Common Black Hawk, Gila Woodpecker, Bell's Vireo, Loggerhead Shrike, Woodhouse's Scrub-jay, Verdin, Cactus Wren, Yellow Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, Abert's Towhee,</i></p> <p>Rare, Unique, or Exceptional Representative Habitat/Ecological Community (<i>low-elevation riparian</i>)</p> <p>Important migratory stop-over/seasonal concentration for migratory land birds (<i>Swainson's Hawk, Red-naped Sapsucker, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Gray Flycatcher, Western Flycatcher, Gray Vireo, Virginia's Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, Brewer's Sparrow, Lark Bunting</i>)</p> <p>Bar Charts - eBird</p>
IBA Polygon Center Point (Latitude, Longitude)	34.3152°N 112.0641°W
Size	16,843 acres
County	Yavapai
Local Communities	Black Canyon City, Cordes Lakes
Description	<p>The Agua Fria National Monument is located in central Arizona approximately forty miles north of Phoenix east of Interstate 17. The 71,100 acres of federal land is comprised of Perry Mesa the adjacent, smaller Black Mesa, the public land to the north of these mesas, and the Agua Fria River Canyon. The area within the boundaries of the monument contains approximately 1,440 acres of private land not part of the designation (mostly associated with ranch headquarters). Elevations range from 2,150 feet above sea level along the Agua Fria Canyon to about 4,600 feet in the northern hills. The principal bird attractor is the 26.5 miles of riparian corridor along the Agua Fria River and tributary canyons.</p>
Mission/Goals	Conservation of an exceptional example of low-elevation desert riparian habitat and the populations of breeding and migratory birds that depend on it.

<p>Current Habitat Conservation, Planning, and Management Activities</p>	<p>The Agua Fria National Monument is managed by the Bureau of Land Management for multiple-uses and with an intent to preserve and protect the Monument archaeological, cultural, historical, topographical, vegetative, and wildlife resources. BLM management activities that benefit habitat and wildlife on the Monument include the implementation of a riparian area livestock grazing standards; a prescription fire program; and an OHV travel plan. In addition, they have installed interpretive signs and remote toilet facilities; and facilitated grasslands restoration projects.</p> <p>The Sonoran Audubon Society facilitates a great deal of data collection that informs the BLM’s management decisions. Data collection efforts include seasonal volunteer bird counts in riparian and uplands habitats, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo surveys, and wet-dry mapping. In addition, the Monument is an area of focus during Audubon Arizona’s annual Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo survey effort.</p> <p>Other activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) Yellow-billed Cuckoo surveys and Pronghorn Antelope Studies - Phoenix Desert Botanical Garden, University of Arizona, and Department of RNR plant inventories - Friends of Agua Fria National Monument and Arizona Antelope Foundation fence removal/modification projects
<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>40.86 Semiarid/Sonoran Savannah Grasslands (<i>Swainson's Hawk, Northern Harrier, Prairie Falcon, Lark Bunting, Brewer's Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Black-Throated Sparrow</i>)</p> <p>25.28 Sonoran Desertscrub: Uplands (<i>American Kestrel, Gila Woodpecker, Verdin, Cactus Wren, Canyon Towhee,</i>)</p> <p>14.70 Riparian (<i>Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Gila Woodpecker, Red-naped Sapsucker, Western Wood-Pewee, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Gray Flycatcher, Western Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, Bell's Vireo, Crissal Thrasher, Virginia's Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, Abert's Towhee, Bullock's Oriole, Hooded Oriole</i>)</p> <p>9.57 Pinyon Pine-Juniper Woodland (<i>Loggerhead Shrike, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Virginia's Warbler, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Scott's Oriole,</i>)</p> <p>5.63 Wash (<i>Gila Woodpecker, Verdin, Bell's Vireo</i>)</p> <p>2.48 Sonoran/Mohave Desertscrub, Mohave and Chihuahuan Desertscrub: (<i>Verdin, Cactus Wren</i>)</p>

	<p>1.08 Interior Chaparral (<i>Gray Vireo, Black-chinned Sparrow</i>)</p> <p>0.39 Other (Madrean Pine-Oak Woodland, Urban/Residential, Mesquite) (<i>Gila Woodpecker, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Bell's Vireo</i>)</p>
<p>Related Habitat Accounts*</p>	<p>Low Grasslands Sonoran Desert *Lowland Riparian Pinyon Juniper</p>
<p>Biological Description</p>	<p>The Agua Fria National Monument consists of semi-desert grassland mesas with pockets of chaparral, mesquite, and desert riparian communities. Within these communities, a number of wells and watering tanks create local micro-habitats. The IBA is restricted to the deeply cut canyons of the Agua Fria River and its tributaries. In the lower reaches of the Agua Fria (near Black Canyon City), the riparian forest is dominated by Fremont cottonwood and Goodding's willow. In the upper reaches of the river, Arizona ash and Arizona sycamore become the dominant riparian trees.</p> <p>This extensive riparian woodland provides both breeding and wintering habitat for a number of bird species and constitutes a recently discovered migration route paralleling the one along the Verde River. It supports one of the higher densities of nesting Yellow-billed Cuckoos in Arizona along with species with special conservation status, including breeding Common Black-Hawk, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Bell's Vireo, Juniper Titmouse, Abert's Towhee, Lucy's Warbler, and Yellow Warbler.</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: Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Peregrine Falcon, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher,</p> <p>Tier 2: Abert's Towhee, American Kestrel, Black-chinned Sparrow, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Black-Throated Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Bullock's Oriole, Cactus Wren, Canyon Towhee, Common Black Hawk, Costa's Hummingbird, Gila Woodpecker, Horned Lark, Hooded Oriole, Lark Bunting, Lincoln's Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, MacGillivray's Warbler (migration), Northern Harrier, Prairie Falcon, Scott's Oriole, Swainson's Hawk, Townsend's Solitaire, Verdin, Vesper Sparrow, 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 and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (Migrant)</p>

	<p><u>USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern</u></p> <p>National – Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Costa’s Hummingbird, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, Bell’s Vireo, Gray Vireo, Virginia’s Warbler, Lucy’s Warbler</p> <p>USFWS Region –Common Black-Hawk, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Costa’s Hummingbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Bell’s Vireo, Gray Vireo, Lucy’s Warbler, Yellow Warbler.</p>
NABCI Bird Conservation Region	34: Sierra Madre Occidental
Ownership	Bureau of Land Management
Conservation Land Status**	National Monument
Human Population Density	Rural
Legislative District(s)	Arizona Congressional District 2 and State Legislative District 1
NRCS Major Land Resource Area	50: Mogollon Transition 52: Sonoran Basin and Range
Visitation, main access, and permits needed	The Agua Fria National Monument is located 40 miles north of Phoenix, AZ. It is easily accessed by traveling on Interstate 17 to the Badger Springs (Exit #256), Bloody Basin Road (Exit #259), or Cordes Lakes/Dugas exits.

*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
Bird Monitoring	H	Annual breeding bird surveys on select routes	Sonoran Audubon Society- Encourage eBird entries
Bird Monitoring	H	Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo survey	2011-Present - Annual surveys facilitated by Audubon Southwest and Sonoran Audubon Society interns.
Bird Monitoring	L	Bird Blitz	First Blitz in 2016 BLM led.
Bird Monitoring	H	Motus Station	Planned for Horseshoe Ranch 2024-2025
IBA Signage	H	Install signs identifying the site as an IBA	Lost and damaged signs have been replaced 2025

**Important Bird Areas: Mini Conservation Plan
 Agua Fria National Monument**

**Updated
 March 2025**

IBA Dedication	Done	Rededication April 19 2025	Complete
Annual Wet Dry Mapping	H	Annual effort to monitor/map flow in the Agua Fria River led by Friends of the Agua Fria National Monument, and the BLM	Ongoing

Partners:

Name	Role(s)	Contact Information	Actions
BLM Phoenix District	Land Manager	https://www.blm.gov/visit/agua-fria (623) 580-5500 blm_az_pdo@blm.gov	Land Manager and AFNM Management Plan and Coordinated Resource Plan
Sonoran Audubon Society	Bird Surveys	https://sonoranaudubon.org/ 602-809-3360	Yellow-billed cuckoo and all bird surveys
Friends of Agua Fria National Monument	Stewards	https://friendsoftheaguafrianationalmonument.wildapricot.org/ fafnmadmin@aguafriafriends.org (480) 779-7414	Annual Wet-Dry Mapping Volunteer Projects
Upper Agua Fria Watershed Partnership	Stewards	http://www.uafwp.org/ info@uafwp.org	Watershed meetings and coordination with partners
Arizona Game and Fish	Fish & Wildlife Management and Horseshoe Ranch	Region VI, Mesa (480) 981-9400	Horseshoe Ranch Cottonwood Garden Coordinated Resource Plan for Horseshoe Ranch

Conservation Targets:

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

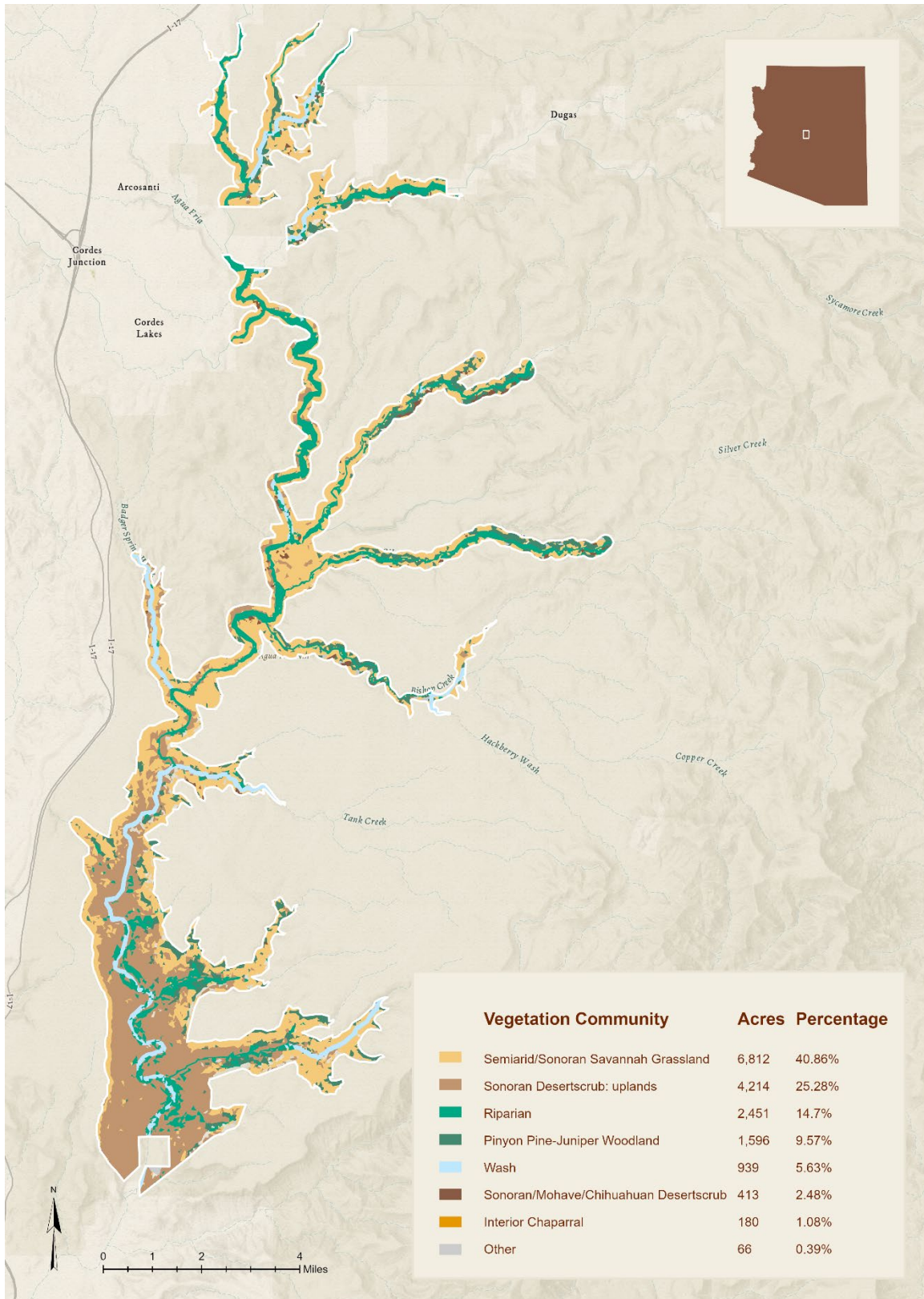
Conservation Target	Current Condition
Native Fish	Poor
Grassland Birds	Fair
Desert Birds	Good
Riparian Birds	Good

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 altered water regime from drought or groundwater pumping pose the greatest threats to birds within this IBA. OHV and riparian pasture grazing are the second greatest threats to riparian birds. Current management has alleviated both threats within the IBA.

Challenges	Desert Birds	Riparian Birds	Native Fish	Grassland Birds	Summary Rating
Altered Water Regime	Low	High	High	Low	High
Grazing	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
OHV Impacts	Low	High	Medium	Low	Medium
Altered Fire Regime	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
Invasive Crayfish	NA	Medium	High	NA	Low
Invasive plants (tamarisk and mustards)	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Low
Summary Ratings:	Low	Medium	High	Medium	Medium

Agua Fria National Monument Riparian Corridors IBA				Severity (1-3)	Scope (1-3)	Permanence (2-4)	Immediacy (Optional 1-2)
Threats on National Database							
Forest Grazing	Overbrowsing riparian trees	5		2	2	1	
Invasive species	Non-native animals (Crayfish)	5		1	2	2	
Invasive species	Non-native plants (Tamarisk, Annuals)	5		1	2	2	
Recreation/Tourism	Off-road vehicles	5		1	3	1	
Water Diversions	Water Level Changes	8		1	3	3	1



Agua Fria NM Riparian Corridors
 Important Bird Area

