

Gilbert Riparian Preserves

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| IBA web pages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> http://www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas/gilbert-riparian-preserves-water-ranch-and-neely-wetlands http://aziba.org/?page_id=353 |
| Priority | State |
| Qualifying Criteria | <p>State: Shorebirds – site supports significant concentration of shorebirds (<100 at one time) (<i>Killdeer, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Dowitcher, Stilt Sandpiper, Wilson’s Snipe, Wilson’s Phalarope</i>)</p> <p>Education - site supports educational programs with significant content focused on avian ecology and riparian</p> |
| IBA Polygon Center Point (Latitude, Longitude) | <p>Gilbert Water Ranch: 33.36° N, 111.73° W Neely Ponds: 33.35° N 111.80° W</p> |
| Size | <p>Gilbert Water Ranch: 110 acres Neely Ponds: 72 acres</p> |
| County | Maricopa |
| Local Communities | Gilbert |
| Description | <p>The Gilbert Riparian Preserves IBA contains two wetland complexes that are part of Gilbert’s water treatment facility: the Gilbert Water Ranch (open to the public) and Neely Ponds (not open to the public). Both consist of riparian, upland, and open water habitats. The upland habitat is native desert scrub and sedge and grasslands dominate the dry basins. This IBA is a migration and over-wintering hotspot for shorebirds in Arizona and is a favorite easy access birding destination for Central Arizona residents. For more information, visit https://www.gilbertaz.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/riparian-preserve-at-water-ranch/about-us.</p> |
| Mission/Goals | To be recognized as a premiere education and recreation resource in Arizona while preserving valuable natural resources, supporting creation and conservation of scarce riparian areas, and protecting needed habitat for wildlife. |
| Current Habitat Conservation, Planning, and Management Activities | While the primary function of these sites is water treatment for the Gilbert, the Water Ranch portion of this IBA is managed for wildlife and wildlife viewing opportunities. |
| Land Cover Type ¹ (%) and Associated Priority ² Birds | <p>57.89 Open Water and Marsh (<i>Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Killdeer, American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Greater Yellowlegs, Lesser Yellowlegs, Solitary Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Dowitcher, Stilt Sandpiper, Wilson’s Snipe, Wilson’s Phalarope, Peregrine Falcon</i>)</p> |

¹Southwest Regional Gap Analysis adjusted using data from <https://www.gilbertaz.gov>

²AGFD SGCN and IBA Qualifying Species

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| | <p>31.58 Riparian (<i>Yellow Warbler, Gila Woodpecker, Abert's Towhee</i>)</p> <p>10.53 Sonoran Desertscrub: Lower Colorado River (<i>Western Burrowing Owl</i>)</p> |
| <p>Related Habitat Accounts*</p> | <p>Lowland Riparian Sonoran Desert</p> |
| <p>Biological Description</p> | <p>These wetlands are positioned within a landscape of widespread urban, agriculture, and desert habitats in the mid-section of the state, and thusly provide an important oasis for shorebirds in migration. The wetland complexes support significant numbers of shorebirds who find ideal foraging habitat in the settling basins of each complex. In addition, the wetlands have ponds of varying water levels that provide roosting and foraging habitat for many waterbird and waterfowl species. Shorebird diversity is high with 14 species using the wetland basins over the two sites. The species in highest concentrations during the migration and winter periods are Long-billed Dowitcher, Least Sandpiper, and Black-necked Stilt. American Avocet join these species in lower numbers primarily during the spring migration period. Peak numbers of all shorebird species (on a single day) over the two wetland complexes are 1100 shorebirds during spring and fall migration periods, and nearly 800 shorebirds during winter. Peregrine Falcon are regularly present during the migration period. Also present are Burrowing Owl which nest in artificial burrows installed for them at the Water Ranch site and American Kestrel and Loggerhead Shrike which may nest on site.</p> |
| <p>Focal Bird Species</p> <p>Bold Type are Road to Recovery species</p> | <p><u>AGFD Species of Greatest Conservation Need</u></p> <p><u>Tier 1:</u> Peregrine Falcon</p> <p><u>Tier 2:</u> Abert's Towhee, American Bittern, American Kestrel, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Killdeer, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Bullock's Oriole, Brewer's Blackbird, Brewer's Sparrow, Cactus Wren, Costa's Hummingbird, Inca Dove, Killdeer, Gilded Flicker, Gila Woodpecker, Hermit Thrush, Hooded Oriole, Horned Lark, Lincoln's Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Harrier, Red-winged Blackbird, Verdin, Western Grebe, Western Wood Pee-wee</p> <p><u>Federal Threatened or Endangered Species</u></p> <p>None</p> <p><u>USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern</u></p> <p>National – Peregrine Falcon, Solitary Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs, Short-billed Dowitcher, Loggerhead Shrike</p> |

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| | USFWS Region – Peregrine Falcon, Solitary Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs, Short-billed Dowitcher, Western Burrowing Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, Yellow Warbler |
| NABCI Bird Conservation Region | 33: Sonoran and Mohave Deserts |
| Ownership | Town of Gilbert |
| Conservation Land Status** | City park/preserve |
| Human Population Density | Urban |
| Legislative District(s) | Arizona Congressional District 5 and State Legislative District 14 |
| NRCS Major Land Resource Area | 52: Sonoran Basin and Range |
| Visitation, main access, and permits needed | For information about visiting this IBA, visit: https://www.gilbertaz.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/parks/riparian-preserve-at-water-ranch |

*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 | AZ IBA Surveys Annual surveys of wintering and spring migrant waterfowl and shorebirds | Encourage eBird entries and shift data collection to eBird platform |
| Bird Monitoring | H | Motus Station | Planned for 2025 |
| IBA Signage | M | Install signs identifying the site as an IBA | Needs updated signs |
| IBA Dedication | M | A formal recognition event | Pending |

Partners:

| Name | Role(s) | Contact Information | Actions |
|---|----------------|---|--|
| Town of Gilbert Parks and Recreation Department | Land Manager | https://www.gilbertaz.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/parks-facility-and-sport-field-rentals/parks-infomation/parks/riparian-preserve-at-water-ranch | Management of Feral Cats, maintenance of riparian habitats, Education and Outreach |

| Name | Role(s) | Contact Information | Actions |
|-------------------------------|----------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Desert Rivers Audubon Society | Steward | https://www.facebook.com/DesertRivers/ | Bird walks, advocacy for the Preserve |

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 |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Shorebirds (Migration stop over) | Good |
| Waterfowl (Winter and Migration) | 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 feral cats pose the greatest threats to birds within this IBA.

| Challenges | Shorebirds | Riparian Birds | Waterfowl | Summary Rating |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Water Management | Low | Low | Low | Low |
| Feral Cats | Medium | Low | Low | Medium |
| Disturbance | Low | Low | Low | Low |
| Summary Ratings: | Medium | Low | Low | Low |

| Gilbert Riparian Preserves (Water Ranch and Neely wetlands) | Severity (1-3) | Scope (1-3) | Permanence (2-4) |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Threats on National Database | | | |
| Disturbance to birds | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Invasive species | 1 | 3 | 2 |

Gilbert Riparian Preserves Important Bird Area

