

Imperial National Wildlife Refuge

IBA web pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://aziba.org/?page_id=411 • NAS IBA 3443 Imperial NWR • AzGFD Conservation Opportunity Area
Priority	Global
Qualifying Criteria	<p>Global: Site Important to Special Status Avian Species (<i>Black Rail</i>)</p> <p>Continental: Site Important to Special Status Avian Species (<i>Yuma Ridgway's Rail</i>)</p> <p>State: Site Important to Special Status Avian Species (<i>Yuma Ridgway's Rail, Black Rail</i>)</p> <p>Rare, Unique, or Exceptional Representative Habitat/Ecological Community (<i>marsh and river slough</i>)</p> <p>Waterfowl concentrations > 2000 at one time (<i>Canada Goose, White-fronted Goose, American Widgeon, Bufflehead, Green-winged Teal, Common Goldeneye, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Redhead, Ruddy Duck</i>)</p> <p>eBird Checklist: https://ebird.org/barchart?byr=1900&eyr=2024&bmo=1&emo=12&r=US-AZ_3443</p>
IBA Polygon Center Point (Latitude, Longitude)	33.00240, -114.48950
Size	25,768 acres
County	Yuma and La Paz, AZ and Imperial, CA
Local Communities	Yuma AZ
Description	Imperial National Wildlife Refuge protects a 30-mile reach of the Colorado River including backwaters, marsh habitat, and riparian areas. Adjacent to the river are mountains dominated by upland desert scrub. Over 15,000 acres of this adjacent habitat are designated wilderness.
Mission/Goals	To conserve a major marsh and river slough that represents a rare/unique habitat mosaic in Arizona, support populations of breeding, year-round and migratory birds including state, continental, and global species of concern as well as significant concentrations of waterfowl.
Current Habitat Conservation, Planning, and Management Activities	Major resource initiatives on the refuge currently include emergent marsh and riparian habitat restoration and management for the benefit of avian species, including secretive marsh birds and neotropical migrants.

<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>40.17 Sonoran/Mojave Desert scrub (<i>Loggerhead Shrike, Vesper Sparrow</i>)</p> <p>21.88</p> <p>14.08 Sonoran Desert scrub Upland (<i>Costa's Hummingbird, Gilded Flicker, Western Screech Owl</i>)</p> <p>Marsh (<i>Yuma Ridgway's Rail, Black Rail, Red-winged Blackbird, Peregrine Falcon</i>)</p> <p>10.21 Riparian: (<i>Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, American Bittern Abert's Towhee</i>)</p> <p>7.53 Open Water (<i>Bald Eagle, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon, White-fronted Goose, American Widgeon, Bufflehead, Green-winged Teal, Common Goldeneye, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Redhead, Ruddy Duck, Clark's Grebe,</i></p> <p>3.05 Backwater (<i>Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Red-winged Blackbird, Belted Kingfisher</i>)</p> <p>2.47 Urban/Residential (<i>Abert's Towhee, Verdin</i>)</p> <p>0.61 Other (Wash, Interior Chaparral, Sonoran Desertscrub: Lower Colorado River, Mesquite, Mohave Desertscrub, Semiarid/Sonoran Savannah Grassland, Agriculture) (<i>Peregrine Falcon, Ferruginous Hawk, Abert's Towhee</i>)</p>
<p>Related Habitat Accounts*</p>	<p>Sonoran Desert Freshwater Marsh Lowland Riparian</p>
<p>Biological Description</p>	<p>Thirty miles of Colorado River bisect Imperial National Wildlife Refuge, including one of the few remaining sections of river that is not channelized. In addition to freshwater marsh and riparian habitat, the refuge also supports Sonoran Desert uplands.</p> <p>The river channel is characterized by sandbars, marshes, backwaters, and riparian habitat. Moving upwards in elevation and distance from the river, habitat transitions into washes dominated by acacia, ironwood, and smoketree. Habitat further up into the mountains adjacent the river contains Sonoran Desert upland desertscrub dominated by creosote bush, paloverde, and ocotillo.</p> <p>Wildlife is most abundant in the winter when migrant birds, most notably waterfowl, congregate in large numbers along the river corridor and associated backwaters.</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, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yuma Ridgway’s Rail</p> <p>Tier 2 – Abert’s Towhee, American Bittern (migration), American Pipit (winter), American Kestrel, Brewer’s Blackbird (winter), Brewer’s Sparrow, Bullock’s Oriole, Cactus Wren, Clark’s Grebe, Costa’s Hummingbird, Golden Eagle, Gilded Flicker, Gila Woodpecker, Hermit Thrush (migration), Hooded Oriole, Horned Lark, Killdeer, Lincoln’s Sparrow (winter), Loggerhead Shrike, MacGillivray’s Warbler (migration), Northern Harrier, Olive-sided Flycatcher (migration), Red-winged Blackbird, Savannah Sparrow (winter), Sprague’s Pipit (rare), Swainson’s Hawk (migration), Swainson’s Thrush (migration), Verdin, Vesper Sparrow (winter), Western Burrowing Owl, Western Grebe, Western Screech Owl</p> <p><u>Federal Threatened or Endangered Species</u></p> <p>Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, and Yuma Ridgway’s Rail.</p> <p><u>USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern</u></p> <p>National – Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Black Rail, Lesser Yellowlegs, Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Costa’s Hummingbird, Calliope Hummingbird, Rufous Hummingbird, Willow Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, Bell’s Vireo, Lucy’s Warbler, Lawrence’s Goldfinch</p> <p>USFWS Region – Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Black Rail, Lesser Yellowlegs, Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Gilded Flicker, Loggerhead Shrike, Bell’s Vireo, Lucy’s Warbler, Yellow Warbler</p>
<p>NABCI Bird Conservation Region</p>	<p>33: Sonoran and Mojave Deserts</p>
<p>Ownership</p>	<p>US Fish and Wildlife Service</p>
<p>Conservation Land Status**</p>	<p>National Wildlife Refuge and Wilderness Area</p>
<p>Human Population Density</p>	<p>Rural</p>
<p>Legislative District(s) (Arizona Only)</p>	<p>Arizona Congressional District 9 and State Legislative District 25 and 30</p>
<p>NRCS Major Land Resource Area</p>	<p>39: Lower Colorado Desert 52: Sonoran Basin and Range</p>
<p>Visitation, main access, and</p>	<p>From Yuma, travel north on Highway 95. Near Milepost 47, turn left</p>

permits needed	<p>onto Martinez Lake Road. Follow Martinez Lake Road west for approximately 10 miles. Turn right onto Red Cloud Mine Road and follow signs directing you to the Visitor Center.</p> <p>The Visitor Center is open from 8:00am to 4:30pm Monday through Friday and 9:00am to 4:00pm on Saturdays and Sundays from November 15 to March 31. Hours may vary in the summer. Camping is not permitted on the refuge but available at Martinez Lake in the community of Fisher’s Landing, as well as adjacent BLM lands.</p> <p>More than 15,000 acres of Imperial National Wildlife Refuge is federally designated wilderness. Travel in wilderness areas is by foot or horseback only. Hunting and fishing are permitted, according to state regulations, in some areas. Please contact the Visitor Center for more information. Unconfined domestic animals are not allowed. Pets are permitted only if under your control at all times.</p> <p>Vehicles are permitted on designated roads only. All off-road vehicle travel is prohibited. All motorized vehicles, including all-terrain vehicles and motorcycles, and all operators must be licensed and insured for highway driving. Speed limit is 25 mph unless posted otherwise.</p>
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*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
Christmas Bird Count	Medium	Martinez Lake-Yuma – northern section of circle	Continue - use CBC data
Bird Monitoring	High	Winter Waterfowl Surveys, USFWS riparian and marsh bird surveys and eBird	Continue – use eBird, Marshbird, and USFWS winter waterfowl data
IBA Signage	High	Update current signs with custom artwork of marsh bird	Pending. Signs are made, need to distribute to refuge.
IBA Dedication	Complete	A formal recognition event	January 5, 2019 at Yuma Nature, Birding, and Heritage Festival
Updated	July 2021		

Partners:

Name	Role(s)	Contact Information	Actions
US Fish and Wildlife Service	Manages riparian, freshwater marsh, and adjacent habitats for the benefit of wildlife.	P.O. Box 72217 12812 N Wildlife Way Yuma, AZ 85365 Phone: 928-783-3371 Fax: 928-783-0652	Management of the refuge with an emphasis on conservation of neotropical migrant birds, marsh birds, riparian, and marshland habitats.
Bureau of Reclamation	Water manager and Multi-species Conservation Plan	www.lcrmscp.gov	Maintains six ponds specifically for the benefit of two endangered fishes: Razorback Sucker and Bonytail Chub, as a part of the Multi-species Conservation Plan (MSCP)
Yuma Audubon Society	IBA Stewards	yaspresident@yahoo.com	Local members that participate in the CBC and keep eBird records
Arizona Game and Fish Department	Bald eagle survey, reservoir winter water bird survey, and colonial nesting bird survey	9140 28th St, Yuma, AZ 85365 Phone: (928) 342-0091	Refuge staff coordinate surveys with statewide surveys through AGFD.

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
Cottonwood/Willow Riparian Birds	Very Good
Waterbirds and Waterfowl	Good
Sonoran Desert Birds	Very Good
Marsh 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 and invasive plants and animals pose the greatest threats to birds within this IBA.

Challenges	Water Birds and Waterfowl	Sonoran Desert Birds	Marsh Birds	Cottonwood/Willow Riparian Birds	Summary Rating
Climate Change (Drought)	Low	Low	Medium	High	Medium
Water Diversions	Low		Low	Low	Low
Water Pollution			Low	Low	Low
Invasive Animals (Tamarisk beetle)	Medium			Medium	Medium
Invasive Animals (Burros)		Low		Medium	Medium
Wildfire		Low	Medium	Low	Low
Invasive Salt Cedar and Phragmites	Medium		Medium	Low	Medium
Disturbance to Birds by Boaters	Low		Low		Low
Summary Ratings:	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium

Imperial NWR				Severity (1-3)	Scope (1-3)	Permanence (2-4)
Threats on National Database						
Invasive species	Non-native animals (tamarisk beetle/burros)	8	1	3	4	
			1	2	2	
Invasive species	Non-native plants (tamarisk, arundo)	5	1	2	3	
Pollution	Water pollution (Agriculture run-off)	6	1	2	2	
			2	3	3	
Water Diversions (incl. impact dikes/dams)	Channelization	5	3	1	1	
Climate Change	Drought	8	1	2	1	
Wild Fire		5				
Disturbance to Birds	Boats	4				

Imperial National Wildlife Refuge Important Bird Area

