

Arivaca Cienega and Creek

IBA web pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://aziba.org/?page_id=778 • NAS Site 898 • AzGFD Conservation Opportunity Area
Priority	State
Qualifying Criteria	<p>State: Site Important to Special Status Avian Species (<i>Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Masked Bobwhite Quail, Gray Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Gila Woodpecker, Buff-collared Nightjar, Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Thick-billed Kingbird, Bell's Vireo, Lucy's Warbler, Grasshopper Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Botteri's Sparrow, Rufous-winged Sparrow</i>)</p> <p>Species in rare/unique habitat <i>Lowland riparian and Cienega marsh</i></p> <p>Important migratory stop-over/seasonal concentration for migratory land birds (<i>Bald Eagle, Swainson's Hawk, American Bittern, Costa's Hummingbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Savannah Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Varied Bunting</i>)</p> <p>Bar Charts - eBird</p>
IBA Polygon Center Point (Latitude, Longitude)	31.56° N, 111.3° W
Size	4930 acres
County	Pima
Local Communities	Arivaca
Description	This IBA represents a rare desert cienega and connected creek system in southern Arizona. These wet habitats are just a small part of the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, which encompasses 118,000 acres. Arivaca IBA is located thirty miles west from I-19, the main north-south interstate highway in southern Arizona, near the town of Arivaca. The cienega is supported by seven springs, making Arivaca Creek in most years a perennial creek for two of its roughly 5-mile length before it enters the Brawley Wash system.
Mission/Goals	To conserve and protect an exceptional example of low-elevation desert riparian and desert grassland habitats and the populations of breeding, wintering, and migratory birds that depend on them.
Current Habitat Conservation, Planning, and Management Activities	Low Grasslands Sonoran Desert Lowland Riparian
Land Cover Type ¹ (%) and Associated Priority ² Birds	64.52 Semiarid/Sonoran Savannah Grassland (<i>Masked Bobwhite Quail, Peregrine Falcon, Swainson's Hawk, Grasshopper Sparrow, Golden</i>

<p>¹Southwest Regional Gap Analysis modified to align with ABBA/SWAP habitat types</p> <p>²AGFD SGCN and IBA Qualifying Species</p>	<p><i>Eagle, Buff-collared Nightjar, Loggerhead Shrike, Gila Woodpecker, Savannah Sparrow, Botteri's Sparrow, Black-Throated Sparrow, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Brewer's Sparrow, Varied Bunting, Vesper Sparrow)</i></p> <p>23.76 Riparian and Cienega (<i>Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Bald Eagle, Common Black Hawk, Gray Hawk, Wood Duck, American Bittern, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Yellow Warbler, Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, Western Screech Owl, Gila Woodpecker, Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Western Wood-Pewee, Thick-billed Kingbird, Northern Beardless- Tyrannulet, Desert Purple Martin, Hermit Thrush, Lincoln's Sparrow, Abert's Towhee, Bullock's Oriole, Hooded Oriole</i>)</p> <p>5.90 Wash (<i>Costa's Hummingbird, Gila Woodpecker, Cactus Wren, Verdin, Canyon Towhee, Pyrrhuloxia</i>)</p> <p>3.61 Chihuahuan Desertscrub (<i>Peregrine Falcon, Golden Eagle, Costa's Hummingbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Gila Woodpecker, Verdin, Canyon Towhee</i>)</p> <p>2.04 Mesquite (<i>Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Western Screech Owl, Gila Woodpecker, Bell's Vireo, Abert's Towhee</i>)</p> <p>0.16 Other (Mexican Evergreen Woodland and Sonoran Desertscrub: Lower Colorado River)</p>
<p>Related Habitat Accounts*</p>	
<p>Biological Description</p>	<p>This IBA is important in Arizona because it supports breeding numbers of Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Gray Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Lucy's Warbler, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, and small but reliable numbers of Costa's Hummingbird, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Tropical and Thick-billed Kingbirds, Rufous-winged Sparrow, and Varied Bunting. Sora and Virginia Rails nest within the Cienega. Buff-collared Nightjar is also known to nest along Arivaca Creek.</p> <p>Additionally, the IBA is stop over for many species in migration including Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Gray Flycatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Lucy's Warbler, Virginia's Warbler, and MacGillivray's Warbler.</p> <p>In winter this IBA becomes a hotspot for sparrows, both in terms of diversity and density. Notable Species include Brewer's, Cassin's, and Grasshopper Sparrows. Winter also brings with it an influx of raptors and wading birds including Peregrine Falcon and Great Egret.</p> <p>Although, not species of conservation concern, the following species are also present in winter: Northern Harrier, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Loggerhead Shrike, Great Blue</p>

	Heron, Green Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron. and Green Kingfisher, a rare species in Arizona.
Focal Bird Species Bold Type are Road to Recovery species	<p><u>AGFD Species of Greatest Conservation Need (2022)</u></p> <p>Tier 1: Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, Masked Bobwhite Quail, American Peregrine Falcon, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo</p> <p>Tier 2: Abert’s Towhee, American Kestrel, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Brewer’s Sparrow, Bullock’s Oriole, Black-Throated Sparrow, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Botteri’s Sparrow, Brewer’s Blackbird, Brewer’s Sparrow, Buff- collared Nightjar, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Bullock’s Oriole, Cactus Wren, Canyon Towhee, Chihuahuan Raven, Common Black Hawk, Costa’s Hummingbird. Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Desert Purple Martin, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Gila Woodpecker, Gilded Flicker, Golden Eagle, Grasshopper Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, Hooded Oriole, Horned Lark, Inca Dove, Killdeer, Lark Bunting, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, Long-eared Owl, MacGillivray’s Warbler, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Northern Harrier, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Prairie Falcon, Pyrrhuloxia, Red-winged Blackbird, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Scott’s Oriole, Swainson’s Hawk, Thick-billed Kingbird, Verdin, Vesper Sparrow, Western Screech Owl, Western Wood-Pewee</p> <p><u>Federal Threatened or Endangered Species</u></p> <p>Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Masked Bobwhite Quail</p> <p><u>USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern</u></p> <p>National –Costa’s Hummingbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Lucy’s Warbler, Peregrine Falcon, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Swainson’s Hawk, Varied Bunting, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo,</p> <p>USFWS Region – Botteri’s Sparrow, Brewer’s Sparrow, Costa’s Hummingbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Lucy’s Warbler, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, Peregrine Falcon, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Varied Bunting, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yellow Warbler</p>
NABCI Bird Conservation Region	33: Sonoran and Mohave Deserts
Ownership	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Conservation Land Status**	Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge
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, main access, and permits needed	For information on trails, access, and more, please visit the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge website here: https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Buenos_Aires/wildlife/watching.html

*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	Buenos Aires NWR CBC	Annual
Bird Monitoring	L	Annual breeding bird surveys	TBA lead
Bird Monitoring	M	Encourage eBird entries	Coordinate with TBA
Bird Monitoring	H	Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Cactus-Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, Waterbird Migration	USFWS Lead and TBA
IBA Signage	H	Install signs identifying the site as an IBA	Signs made and with TBA
IBA Dedication	M	A formal recognition event	Pending

Partners:

Name	Role(s)	Contact Information	Actions
Buenos Aires NWR	Land Manager	P.O. Box 109 Sasabe, AZ 85633 Contact Information	Approval of updated mini-plan
Friends of Buenos Aires NWR	Site Steward	fobanwr@gmail.com Contact Information	Site volunteers and advocates for the refuge. Coordinate volunteer work projects.
Tucson Bird Alliance	IBA Steward	Contact Information	Advocacy and bird surveys

Name	Role(s)	Contact Information	Actions
Altar Valley Conservation Alliance	Local Rancher Conservation Partnership	Contact Information	Local collaborative partnership with landowners and managers

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	Good
Mesquite Bosque Birds	Good
Grassland Birds	Good
Cienega Birds	Fair

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 groundwater pumping pose the greatest threats to birds within this IBA.

Challenges	Grassland Birds	Cottonwood /Willow Riparian Birds	Mesquite Bosque Birds	Cienega Birds	Summary Rating
Cowbird Parasitism		Medium	Medium		Medium
Invasive Plants	Medium	Low	Low	Medium	Low
Development (Water Table Drawdown)	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium
Invasive Animals Bullfrogs				Medium	Low
Drought	Low	High	Low	High	Medium

Arivaca Cienega and Creek	Severity (1-3)	Scope (1-3)	Permanence (2-4)
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**Important Bird Areas: Mini Conservation Plan
Arivaca Cienega and Creek**

**Updated
April 2025**

Threats on National Database					
Industrialization/Urbanization	Development (offsite)	5	1	1	3
Invasive species	Non-native animals (other than birds)	5	1	2	2
Natural events	Cowbird parasitism	6	1	2	3
Natural events	Drought	8	3	2	3

Arivaca Cienega / Arivaca Creek Important Bird Area

