

Blue and San Francisco River Complex

IBA web pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - http://www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas/blue-and-san-francisco-rivers-ecosystem-apache-sitgreaves-national-forests - http://aziba.org/?page_id=291 - AzGFD Conservation Opportunity Areas - Lower Blue River Aquatic COA
Priority	State
Qualifying Criteria	<p>Site Important to Special Status Avian Species (<i>Mexican Spotted Owl, Northern Goshawk, Peregrine Falcon, Common Black-hawk, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Belted Kingfisher, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Purple Martin, Bell's Vireo, Lucy's Warbler, Hooded Oriole, Gray Catbird, Bendire's Thrasher, McGillivray's Warbler, White-throated Swift, Golden Eagle, Greater Pewee, Red-faced Warbler, Juniper Titmouse, Gray Vireo, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Black-chinned Sparrow</i>)</p> <p>Rare, Unique, or Exceptional Representative Habitat/Ecological Community (<i>riparian</i>)</p> <p>Important migratory stop-over/seasonal concentration for migratory land birds (<i>American Dipper, Yellow-breasted Chat, Sumer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Solitary Sandpiper, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher</i>)</p> <p>eBird Checklist: https://ebird.org/barchart?byr=1975&eyr=2020&bmo=1&emo=12&r=US-AZ_1232</p>
IBA Polygon Center Point (Latitude, Longitude)	31.56°N, 111.3°W
Size	106,642 acres
County	Greenlee
Local Communities	Alpine, Clifton
Description	<p>This IBA begins at the point of entry of the Blue River into Arizona (from its headwaters in New Mexico), which is east of Alpine, AZ. The site follows the Blue River to its confluence with the San Francisco River and includes two of its tributaries, Campbell Blue River and KP Creek. The site also includes the San Francisco River from its entrance into Arizona to near Clifton, AZ. The IBA includes approximately forty miles of the Blue River, ten miles of the Campbell Blue River, five miles of KP Creek, and over twenty miles of the San Francisco River.</p>

	<p>This river system and approximately a 3/4 mile buffer on either side comprise this IBA. The elevation ranges from nearly 9,000 feet at the highest points of the Campbell Blue headwaters near Alpine to about 3,300 feet along the San Francisco near Clifton. Of the total 400,000-acre Blue River watershed, ninety-nine percent is managed by the U.S. Forest Service for the public. Fifty-five percent of the watershed is a designated Primitive Area. The remoteness and limited accessibility to this area may be an asset to this IBA’s long-term conservation</p>
<p>Mission/Goals</p>	<p>Conservation of an exceptional example of riparian habitat and the populations of breeding and migratory birds that depend on it.</p>
<p>Current Habitat Conservation, Planning, and Management Activities</p>	<p>The U.S. Forest Service has acted to remove most livestock grazing from the main Blue River over the last decade, allowing for the natural regeneration of the riparian habitat and recovery of natural hydrological processes. The ranching lifestyle has been diminishing and the community of residents are changing from ranchers to second-homeowners, retirees, and outfitters. With these changes, there is a potential for increased subdivision and development on private lands. Opportunities may also arise as tourism may be potentially be seen as a new source of revenue.</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>40.42 Pinyon Pine-Juniper Woodland (<i>Juniper Titmouse, Gray Vireo, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Ferruginous Hawk, Common Nighthawk, Pinyon Jay</i>)</p> <p>26.42 Ponderosa Pine Forest (<i>Ponderosa Pine and Pine-Gambel’s Oak</i>) (<i>Cordilleran Flycatcher, Greater Pewee, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Common Nighthawk, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Northern Goshawk</i>)</p> <p>19.01 Semi-arid Sonoran Savannah Grassland (<i>Peregrine Falcon, Bendire’s Thrasher, Golden Eagle, Western Grasshopper Sparrow, Ferruginous Hawk, Common Nighthawk, Gila Woodpecker, Savannah Sparrow</i>)</p> <p>5.46 Riparian (<i>Peregrine Falcon, Common Black-hawk, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Belted Kingfisher, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Purple Martin, Bell’s Vireo, Lucy’s Warbler, Hooded Oriole, Gray Catbird, MacGillivray’s Warbler, American Dipper, Yellow-breasted Chat, Sumer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Solitary Sandpiper, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, American Bittern, Swainson’s Thrush, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Yellow Warbler, Magnificent Hummingbird, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Gila Woodpecker, Pacific Wren</i>)</p> <p>2.66 Interior Chaparral (<i>Peregrine Falcon, Golden Eagle, Juniper Titmouse, Gray Vireo, Black-chinned Sparrow, Common Nighthawk</i>)</p>

	<p>2.54 High Elevation Forest (Mixed Conifer, Aspen, Sub-alpine Spruce-Fir, Montane Meadow) (<i>Mexican Spotted Owl, Northern Goshawk, Cordilleran Flycatcher, MacGillivray's Warbler, Greater Pewee, Red-faced Warbler, Swainson's Thrush, Evening Grosbeak, Dusky Grouse</i>)</p> <p>1.49 Madrean Pine-Oak Woodland (<i>Mexican Spotted Owl, Greater Pewee, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Magnificent Hummingbird</i>)</p> <p>1.41 Sonoran Desertscrub: Lower Colorado River, Desert Scrub, Chihuahuan Desert Scrub (<i>Gila Woodpecker, Verdin</i>)</p> <p>0.59 Other (Rock, Cold Temperate (Great Basin) Grassland, Mexican Evergreen Woodland) (<i>Peregrine Falcon, White-throated Swift, Golden Eagle, Common Nighthawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Golden Eagle, Western Grasshopper Sparrow</i>)</p>
<p>Related Habitat Accounts*</p>	<p>Pinyon Juniper Conifer Forest Low Grassland Lowland Riparian High Riparian Madrean Pine-Oak High Grassland Sonoran Desert</p>
<p>Biological Description</p>	<p>This remote IBA provides habitat for the Mexican Spotted Owl and the "Apache" race of Northern Goshawk. In addition, the riparian habitat along the San Francisco and lower Blue Rivers provides habitat for the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and other riparian-dependent species including Bell's Vireo, Lucy's Warbler, Common Black Hawk, Great and Snowy Egret, and wintering Bald Eagle. The higher-elevation conifer forests are habitat for Grace's, MacGillivray's, and Red-faced Warbler, Band-tailed Pigeon, Calliope and Rufous hummingbird, and Flammulated Owl.</p> <p>Historically, the greatest stress to the river system was caused by livestock grazing, which caused significant hydrological changes. By removing upland and riparian vegetation, cattle exposed highly-erosive soils. This led to increased erosion, subsequent reduction in the natural meandering of the stream, scouring, sedimentation, flooding, and channelization of the river corridor. While cattle have been removed from the main Blue River, catastrophic fire resulting from bark beetle infestation and drought stress in the upper watershed could result in similar problems.</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, American Peregrine Falcon, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Mexican Spotted Owl, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo</p> <p>Tier2: American Bittern, American Dipper, American Goshawk, American Kestrel, Band-tailed Pigeon, Black-chinned Sparrow, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Broad-billed Hummingbird, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Bullock’s Oriole, Canyon Towhee, Cassin’s Finch, Common Black Hawk, Common Nighthawk, Dusky Grouse, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Evening Grosbeak, (Migration), Flammulated Owl, Gila Woodpecker, Golden Eagle, Grace’s Warbler, Gray Flycatcher, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Gray Vireo, Hermit Thrush, Hooded Oriole, Loggerhead Shrike, Mountain Chickadee, MacGillivray’s Warbler, Northern Pygmy Owl, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Pacific Wren, Pinyon Jay, Red-faced Warbler, Rivoli’s Hummingbird, Savannah Sparrow, Scott’s Oriole, Steller’s Jay, Swainson’s Thrush, Townsend’s Solitaire, Verdin, Vesper Sparrow, Western Grasshopper Sparrow, Western Screech Owl, Western Wood-pewee, Woodhouse’s Scrub Jay, Yellow Warbler</p> <p><u>Federal Threatened or Endangered Species</u> Mexican Spotted Owl, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher</p> <p><u>USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern</u></p> <p>National – Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Solitary Sandpiper, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Mexican Spotted Owl, Bell’s Vireo, Gray Vireo, Pinyon Jay, Bendire’s Thrasher, Lucy’s Warbler, Red-faced Warbler, Black-chinned Sparrow</p> <p>USFWS Region – Bald Eagle, Common Black Hawk, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Solitary Sandpiper, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Bell’s Vireo, Gray Vireo, Pinyon Jay, Bendire’s Thrasher, Lucy’s Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Red-faced Warbler, Black-chinned Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow</p>
<p>NABCI Bird Conservation Region</p>	<p>34: Sierra Madre Occidental</p>
<p>Ownership</p>	<p>U.S Forest Service – Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest (private inholdings only included with landowner permission)</p>
<p>Conservation Land Status**</p>	<p>National Forest (100% of the IBA) and Primitive Area (55% of the IBA)</p>
<p>Human Population Density</p>	<p>Rural</p>

Legislative District(s)	Arizona Congressional Districts 2 and 6 and State Legislative Districts 6 and 19
NRCS Major Land Resource Area	50: Mogollon Transition 51: Arizona and New Mexico Mountains
Visitation, main access, and permits needed	<p>This IBA is located adjacent to the New Mexico border, northeast of Clifton and south of Alpine. For access from Alpine, take county route 12 toward Reserve, N.M. and Luna Lake. Turn south on Forest Road 281 into the IBA and to a trailhead into the Blue Primitive Area.</p> <p>The Strayhorse Trail, with a trailhead at the Rose Peak Campground, provides hiking access into the middle of the IBA from the west. Access can also be found through the Juan Miller Campground, 27 miles north of Clifton via Highway 191 and Forest Road 475.</p> <p>The Blue and San Francisco Rivers are very remote.</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
eBird	M	Encourage eBird entries	Promote eBird participation using aziba.org and outreach to AZFO and Audubon chapters.
AZ IBA Surveys	L	None	Use eBird and species specific survey data
IBA Signage	M	Install signs identifying the site as an IBA	Signs have been given to A-S Forest
IBA Dedication	L	A formal recognition event	Pending

Partners:

Name	Role(s)	Contact Information	Actions
Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest Alpine and Clifton Ranger Districts	Land Manager	Contact Information	Timber, grazing, and recreation management.
White Mountains Audubon Society	Volunteers and IBA Steward	Web Site: http://www.whitemountainaudubon.org/	Attends northeastern Arizona ABCI meetings
Arizona Game and Fish Department	Fish and Wildlife Management	Pinetop Regional Office (928) 367-4281	Hosts 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.

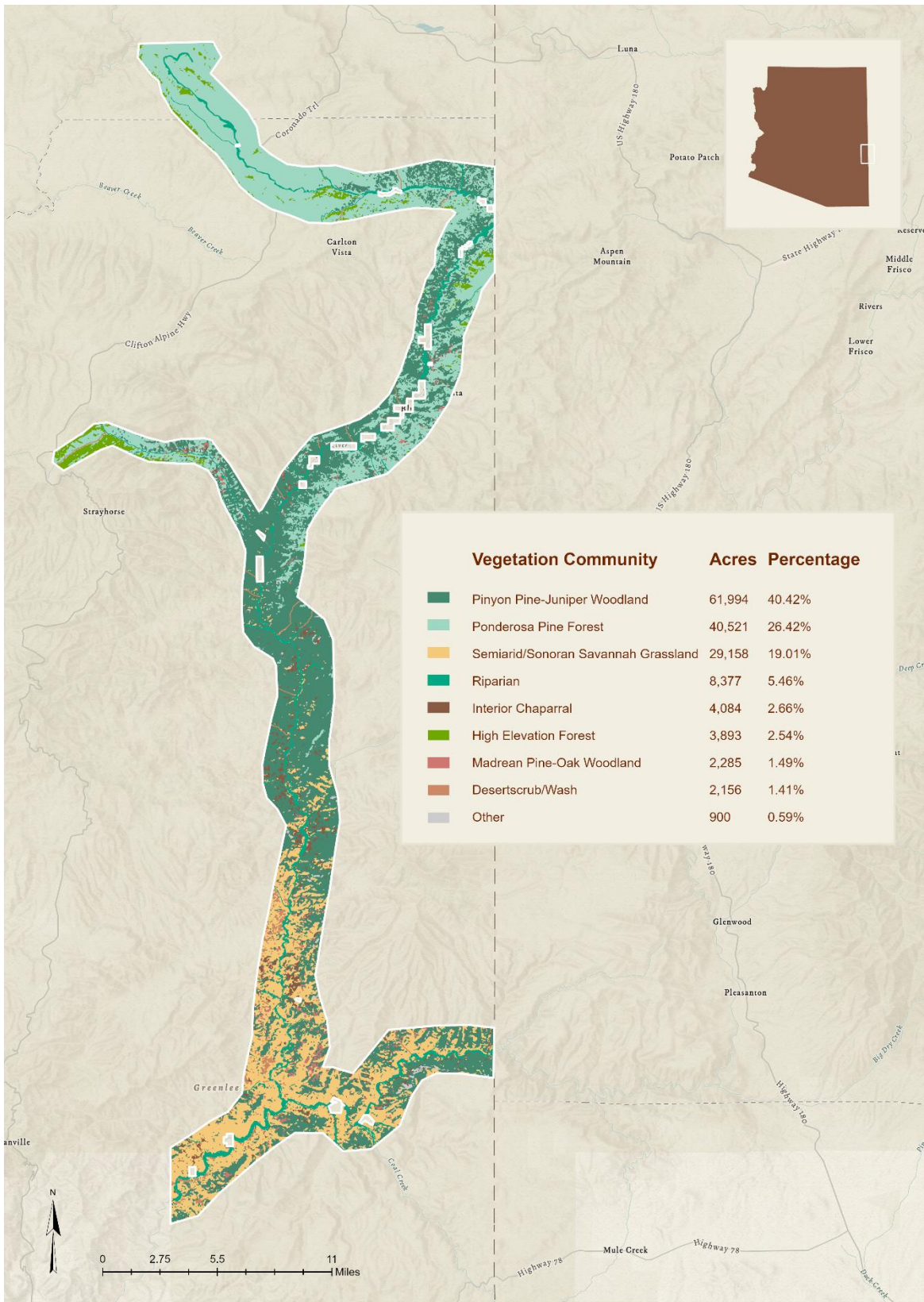
Conservation Target	Current Condition
Grassland Birds	Good
Mixed Conifer and Spruce-Fir Birds	Good
High and Low Elevation Riparian Birds	Fair
Ponderosa Pine Birds	Good
Pinyon and Juniper Birds	Good

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 and wild fire pose the greatest threats to birds within this IBA.

Challenges	Ponderosa Pine Birds	Semi-Arid Grassland Birds	Pinyon and Juniper Birds	High and Low Elevation Riparian Birds	Mixed Conifer and Spruce/Fir Forest Birds	Summary Rating
Over browsing by Elk and Horses	Low	NA	NA	High	NA	Medium
Invasive Species Tamarisk	NA	NA	NA	Medium	NA	Low
Invasive Species Juniper	Medium	High	Medium	NA	Low	Low
Off Road Vehicles	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low
Drought	High	Medium	Medium	High	High	High
Overgrazing	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low
Wild Fire	High	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
Summary Ratings:	High	High	Low	High	High	High

Blue and San Francisco Rivers	Severity (1-3)	Scope (1-3)	Permanence (2-4)
Threats on National Database	1	3	1
Forest Grazing 5	1	2	2
Invasive species; tamarisk and juniper 5	3	2	3
Natural events Fire, Drought 8			



Blue and San Francisco Rivers Complex
Important Bird Area

