

Imperial Reservoir

IBA web pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://aziba.org/?page_id=422 • National Audubon Society IBA Portal id=906 • AzGFD Conservation Opportunity Area
Priority	Global
Qualifying Criteria	<p>Global: Species of Conservation Concern (<i>California Black Rail</i>)</p> <p>Continental: Species of Conservation Concern (<i>Yuma Ridgway's Rail</i>)</p> <p>State: Species in rare/unique habitat (<i>Low-elevation Riparian and Freshwater Marsh</i>)</p> <p>eBird Checklist: https://ebird.org/barchart?byr=1900&eyr=2024&bmo=1&emo=12&r=US-AZ_906</p>
IBA Polygon Center Point (Latitude, Longitude)	32.887°N: 114.4586°W
Size	3,535 acres
County	Yuma
Local Communities	Yuma
Description	This IBA consists of the system of impoundments, channels, marshes, and backwaters extending from Imperial Dam upstream to Fisher's Landing (below Martinez Lake). There are two seasons in this lowest reach of the Lower Colorado River: the high-water period, from spring through Thanksgiving, and the low-water period, from autumn to spring.
Mission/Goals	To conserve and protect unique examples of freshwater marsh and lowland riparian communities and the special status avian species that depend on them.
Current Habitat Conservation, Planning, and Management Activities	<p>Land use is primarily recreation (fishing, hunting, and boating), and secondarily wildlife/nature conservation. Imperial Dam is operated with the primary objective of providing water to the All American and Gila Gravity Main canals.</p> <p>Most riparian habitats have been overgrown by tamarisk and some areas by phragmites, but no management actions are presently being taken. Dredging would be a threat to marsh habitat if implemented (no pending proposals). Increasing selenium levels along the lower Colorado River poses a threat to avian populations.</p>
Land Cover Type ¹ (%) and Associated Priority ² Birds	45.74 Freshwater Marsh (<i>California Black Rail, Yuma Ridgway's Rail, American Bittern</i>)

<p>¹Southwest Regional Gap Analysis modified to align with ABBA/SWAP habitat types</p> <p>²AGFD SGCN and IBA Qualifying Species</p>	<p>14.50 Backwater (<i>California Black Rail, Yuma Ridgway's Rail, American Bittern, Shorebirds</i>)</p> <p>35.88 Open Water (<i>Bald Eagle, Waterfowl</i>)</p> <p>4.79 Riparian (<i>Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Bald Eagle, Lincoln's Sparrow, Abert's Towhee, Bell's Vireo</i>)</p> <p>0.06 Other (Sonoran Desertscrub: Uplands, Sonoran/Mohave Desertscrub, Interior Chaparral, Urban/Residential) (<i>Gilded Flicker, Gila Woodpecker, Western Burrowing Owl, Abert's Towhee</i>)</p>
<p>Related Habitat Accounts*</p>	<p>Freshwater Marsh Lowland Riparian Sonoran Desert</p>
<p>Biological Description</p>	<p>This IBA supports substantial populations of Yuma Ridgway's Rail and California Black Rail. High quality marsh habitat supports other wetland bird populations, such as Virginia Rail, Sora, Least Bittern, and American Bittern. Also, this IBA supports a large wintering population of American Coots (>2000 individuals). The site is part of a major migratory corridor, providing habitat for migrating neotropical birds.</p> <p>Spring and Fall offer the greatest variety of birds and the best birding opportunities. 275 species have been observed on the refuge. The refuge is also important as a wintering area for Canada geese and many species of ducks. Part of this IBA is within the Yuma Christmas Bird Count circle. Species of special conservation status and interest that use the habitats within this IBA include:</p> <p><u>Year-round breeding residents:</u> Pied-billed Grebe, Common Gallinule, American Coot, Yuma Ridgway's Rail, California Black Rail, Virginia Rail, Sora, Least Bittern, Turkey Vulture, Barn Owl, Great Horned Owl, Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Osprey, Spotted Sandpiper, Greater Roadrunner, Turkey Vulture, Gambel's Quail, Ladder-backed and Gila woodpeckers, Loggerhead Shrike, Black Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Verdin, and Song Sparrow</p> <p><u>Migration:</u> American Bittern, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Hermit, Black-throated Gray, Lucy's, MacGillivray's, Townsend's, Virginia's, Wilson's, Nashville, and Yellow Warblers, and Common Yellowthroat</p> <p><u>Winter:</u> Canada Goose, Snow Goose, Ruddy Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Cinnamon Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Greater Yellow-legs, Long-billed Dowitcher, Western</p>

	Sandpiper, Least Sandpiper, White-faced Ibis, American White Pelican, Peregrine & Prairie falcons, Merlin, Bald Eagle, and Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned warbler
Focal Bird Species	<u>AGFD Species of Greatest Conservation Need (2022)</u>
Bold Type are Road to Recovery species	Tier 1 – Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yuma Ridgway’s Rail
	Tier 2 –Abert’s Towhee, American Bittern (migration), American Kestrel, American Pipit (winter), Brewer’s Blackbird (winter), Bullock’s Oriole, Cactus Wren, Clark’s Grebe, Costa’s Hummingbird, Gila Woodpecker, Golden Eagle, Hooded Oriole, Killdeer, Lincoln’s Sparrow (winter), Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Harrier, Olive-sided Flycatcher (migration), Red-winged Blackbird, Savannah Sparrow (winter), Swainson’s Hawk (migration), Verdin, Vesper Sparrow (winter), Western Burrowing Owl, Western Grebe, Western Screech Owl, Western Wood-Pewee (migration)
	<u>Federal Threatened or Endangered Species</u>
	Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yuma Ridgway’s Rail
	<u>USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern</u>
	National – Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, California Black Rail , Loggerhead Shrike, Bell’s Vireo, Virginia’s Warbler, Lucy’s Warbler
	USFWS Region – Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, California Black Rail, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Burrowing Owl, Gilded Flicker, Loggerhead Shrike, Bell’s Vireo, Lucy’s Warbler, Yellow Warbler
NABCI Bird Conservation Region	33: Sonoran and Mojave Deserts
Ownership	Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Reclamation
Conservation Land Status**	None
Human Population Density	Rural
Legislative District(s)	Arizona Congressional District 4 and State Legislative District 13
NRCS Major Land Resource Area	39: Lower Colorado Desert 52: Sonoran Basin and Range
Visitation, main access, and permits needed	Fisher’s Landing and campground located on the north end of the reservoir and Imperial Dam and Hidden Shores Resort on the south end are places with good access. An excellent resource for birding this IBA and the lower Colorado River region is Southwest Birders web site at www.southwestbirders.com .

*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
CBC	Medium	Annual winter bird survey	Part of the Yuma CBC circle
Marsh Bird Surveys	High	Annual breeding bird surveys	Az Game & Fish and USFWS lead-
IBA Signage	Medium	Install signs identifying the site as an IBA	Partial-signs delivered to land managers
IBA Dedication	Complete	A formal recognition event	Dedication completed during 2019 Yuma Bird, Nature, and History Festival

Partners:

Name	Role(s)	Contact Information	Actions
Bureau of Reclamation	Water manager and Multi-species Conservation Plan	www.lcrmscp.gov	Multi-species Conservation Plan Dam operations
Bureau of Land Management Yuma Field Office	Land manager	7341 E 30th St, Yuma, AZ 85365 Phone: (928) 317-3200 https://www.blm.gov/office/yuma-field-office	Vegetation management with partners.
Arizona Game & Fish Department Yuma Region	Wildlife manager in conjunction with Mittry Lake Wildlife Area	9140 28th St, Yuma, AZ 85365 Phone: (928) 342-0091	Annual marsh bird surveys winter water bird survey, colonial nesting bird survey, and waterfowl surveys
Yuma Audubon Society	IBA Stewards	yaspresident@yahoo.com http://www.audubonyuma.org/	Local members that participate in the CBC and keep eBird records
US Fish and Wildlife Service	Migratory birds, waterfowl, and endangered species lead	P.O. Box 72217 12812 N Wildlife Way Yuma, AZ 85365 Phone: 928-783-3371 Fax: 928-783-0652	Multi-species Conservation Plan partner

Conservation Targets:

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

Conservation Target	Current Condition
Waterbirds and Waterfowl	Good
Marsh Birds	Very Good
Sonoran Desert 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 non-native phragmites replacing native marsh and water pollution from agriculture (Selenium) pose the greatest threats to birds within this IBA.. Strategies: The Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Plan is implementing riparian forest and marsh restoration projects.

Challenges	Water Birds and Waterfowl	Sonoran Desert Birds	Marsh Birds	Summary Rating
Climate Change (Drought)	Low	Low	Medium	Low
Water Diversions	Low		Low	Low
Water Pollution	Low		Medium	Medium
Wildfire		Low	low	Low
Invasive Phragmites			Medium	Medium
Disturbance to Birds by Boaters	Low		Low	Low
Summary Ratings:	Low	Low	Low	Medium

18) Imperial Reservoir				Severity (1-3)	Scope (1-3)	Permanence (2-4)
Threats on National Database						
Invasive species	Non-native plants	(tamarisk, arundo)	7	1	3	3
Pollution		Water pollution (Agriculture)	6	1	2	3
Water Diversions		(incl. impact dikes/dams)	5	1	2	2

Imperial Reservoir Important Bird Area

