

Lower Colorado River Gadsden Riparian Area

IBA web pages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://aziba.org/?page_id=436 • NAS Site 1234
Priority	State
Qualifying Criteria	<p>State Site Important to Special Status Avian Species (Yuma Ridgway’s Rail, Abert’s Towhee, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo)</p> <p>Outstanding Landbird Stopover (Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo)</p> <p>eBird Bar Chart https://ebird.org/barchart?byr=1900&eyr=2023&bmo=1&emo=12&r=US-AZ_1234</p>
IBA Polygon Center Point (Latitude, Longitude)	32.55° N: 114.8° W
Size	2,398 acres
County	Yuma
Local Communities	Gadsden, San Luis, Somerton, Yuma
Description	<p>This 3-mile portion of the lower Colorado River is within the lowest U.S. division of the river, referred to as the Limitrophe Division. The upper portion is about 12 miles south of Morelos Dam and the lowest portion is about 1 mile north of the Mexico border. While almost all of the Colorado River is diverted into Mexico's Alamo Canal at Morelos Dam, some permanent flow of water exists in the Limitrophe Division as a result of leakage through Morelos Dam and irrigation return water. As opposed to the rest of the lower Colorado River, the Limitrophe Division is still subject to periodic floods (though small in scale) that result when upstream releases exceed the capacity of the Alamo Canal. These flows tend to favor the establishment of native vegetation over exotics. Prominent features within this IBA include Hunter's Hole and Gadsden Bend.</p> <p>The IBA is an important part of the patchwork of restored and protected lands on both the US and Mexican side of the Limitrophe. These areas are valuable both individually and cumulatively in supporting the birds that depend on this area.</p>
Mission/Goals	To support and protect a significant example of low-elevation riparian habitat and the populations of breeding, year-round and migratory birds that depend on it.
Current Habitat Conservation, Planning, and Management Activities	On the Mexican side of the Limitrophe Zone our partners at Pronatura Noroeste have restored 420 acres of quality riparian habitat at the Miguel Aleman site, and have plans to restore a total 378 acres at the Janitzio site (starting with 38 acres in 2023). On the US side, the Lower



	<p>Colorado River MultiSpecies Conservation Program restored 44 acres of cottonwood willow at Hunters Hole, The Cocopah Indian Tribe is managing their lands using Bureau of Land Management Area of Critical Environmental Concern criteria to reestablish their ties to the river.</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>49.76 Riparian and Freshwater Emergent Marsh (<i>Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Bald Eagle, Yuma Ridgway's Rail, Killdeer, Yellow Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, Gila Woodpecker, Gilded Flicker, Bullock's Oriole, Abert's Towhee</i>)</p> <p>43.02 Sonoran/Mojave Desertscrub (<i>Western Burrowing Owl, Abert's Towhee</i>)</p> <p>3.79 Sonoran Desertscrub: Uplands (<i>Gila Woodpecker, Gilded Flicker, Abert's Towhee</i>)</p> <p>1.76 Semiarid/Sonoran Savannah Grassland (<i>Western Burrowing Owl</i>)</p> <p>1.02 Sonoran Desertscrub: Lower Colorado River (<i>Abert's Towhee</i>)</p> <p>0.65 Other (Agriculture, Mojave Desertscrub, Interior Chaparral) (<i>Western Burrowing Owl, Mountain Plover (migration), Abert's Towhee</i>)</p>
<p>Related Habitat Accounts*</p>	<p>Lowland Riparian Freshwater Marsh Sonoran Desert Low Grassland</p>
<p>Biological Description</p>	<p>The lower Colorado River is a major migratory corridor for neotropical birds and also provides significant winter and nesting habitat. This IBA is a key segment of this corridor because it includes some of the best riparian habitat along the entire 40-mile stretch of river between the southern international boundary near San Luis and Laguna Dam. It also includes the only significant marsh in that stretch of river. The vegetation community is primarily riparian, with good stands of Fremont cottonwood (<i>Populus fremontii</i>) and Goodding's willow (<i>Salix gooddingii</i>) at Hunter's Hole and Gadsden Bend. Saltcedar (<i>Tamarix ramosissima</i>), arrowweed (<i>Pluchea sericea</i>), and quailbush (<i>Atriplex lentiformis</i>) are dominant elsewhere. A cattail (<i>Typha domingensis</i>) marsh exists at Hunter's Hole and some small pockets of cattail marsh occur elsewhere. Adjacent lands are agricultural and provide some foraging and nesting habitat.</p> <p>California's Central Valley and the Colorado River Delta are connected hotspots for North America's migratory landbirds. The study, published today in Ornithological Applications, shows that tens of millions of birds depend on the regions' river and wetland habitat on their journey through a largely dry, arid landscape. https://www.audubon.org/news/tens-millions-western-birds-</p>

	depend-these-two-regions-during-migration and DeLuca, Willam V., etal. 2021. The Colorado River Delta and California’s Central Valley are critical regions for many migrating North American landbirds Volume 123, 2021, pp. 1–14 DOI: 10.1093/ornithapp/duaa064
Focal Bird Species Bold Type are Road to Recovery species	<p><u>AGFD Species of Greatest Conservation Need (2022)</u></p> <p>Tier 1 – American Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Yuma Ridgway’s Rail</p> <p>Tier 2 – Abert’s Towhee, American Kestrel, American Pipit, Bullock’s Oriole, Cactus Wren, Costa’s Hummingbird, American Bittern, Killdeer, Gila Woodpecker, Gilded Flicker, Horned Lark, Killdeer, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, Mountain Plover (migration), Olive-sided Flycatcher (migration), Red-winged Blackbird, Savannah Sparrow, Thick-billed Kingbird, Verdin, Western Burrowing Owl</p> <p><u>Federal Threatened or Endangered Species</u> Yuma Ridgway’s Rail, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo</p> <p><u>USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern</u> National – Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Mountain Plover, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Costa’s Hummingbird, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher</p> <p>USFWS Region – Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Mountain Plover, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Burrowing Owl, Costa’s Hummingbird, Gilded Flicker, Yellow Warbler,</p>
NABCI Bird Conservation Region	33: Sonoran and Mohave Deserts
Ownership	Jurisdiction of the area is a complex interplay between the Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers, International Boundary and Water Commission, Bureau of Land Management, Cocopah Tribe, and various Mexican agencies.
Conservation Land Status**	A conservation plan for Hunter's Hole has been completed by Arizona Game and Fish Department.
Human Population Density	Rural
Legislative District(s)	Arizona Congressional District 7 and State Legislative District 23
NRCS Major Land Resource Area	39: Lower Colorado Desert
Visitation, main access, and permits needed	Access is difficult and visiting is best recommended with a local guide. An excellent resource for birding this IBA and the lower Colorado River region is <i>Finding Birds in Yuma County, Arizona</i> by Henry Detwiler.

*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 data	L	Voluntary eBird submissions	Encourage participation by birders
Coordinate with Mexico Surveys	M	Mexico bird surveys at restoration sites	Coordinate with ProNatura
IBA Signage	L	Install signs identifying the site as an IBA	Pending – Limited locations for signage.
IBA Dedication	L	A formal recognition event	Pending-Limited opportunities

Partners:

Name	Role(s)	Contact Information	Actions
Bureau of Land Management	Land Manager	Yuma Field Office https://www.blm.gov/office/yuma-field-office	Access and partner coordination
Arizona Game and Fish Department	Liaison with other partners	Yuma Regional Office Fortuna Road	Local contact
Cocopah Indian Tribe	Land Steward	Environmental Protection Office Phone: 928-627-2025	River Restoration
Pronatura Noreste	Riparian habitat restoration in Mexico	https://pronatura-noroeste.org/en/water-management-for-the-colorado-river/	Mexico riparian restoration and irrigation water management

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
Desert Birds	Very Good
Marsh Birds	Fair
Waterbirds and Waterfowl	Good

Conservation Target	Current Condition
Cottonwood/Willow Riparian Birds	Fair

Conservation Challenges:

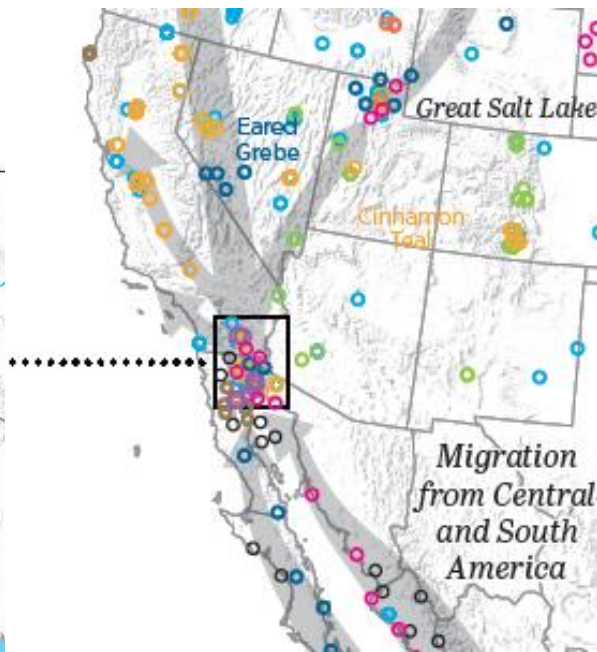
Conservation challenges are primarily human activities that immediately affect what we are trying to conserve. Through a Miradi process, it was found that water diversions pose the greatest threats to birds within this IBA.

Challenges	Marsh Birds	Waterfowl and Waterbirds	Riparian Birds	Desert Birds	Summary Rating
Invasive Plants	Medium	Low	High	Low	Medium
Water Pollution	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Medium
Water Diversions	High	High	Very High	Low	High
Summary Ratings:	Medium	Medium	High	Low	Medium

Lower Colorado River Gadsden Riparian Area				Severity (1-3)	Scope (1-3)	Permanence (2-4)
Threats on National Database						
Invasive species	Non-native	(tamarisk, arundo)	6	1	2	3
plants						
Pollution		Water pollution (Agriculture)	6	2	2	2
Water Diversions (incl. impact dikes/dams)			8	3	2	3

- ➔ Major migration routes
- American White Pelican
- Brant
- Cinnamon Teal
- Eared Grebe
- Green-winged Teal
- Long-billed Curlew
- Northern Pintail
- Snow Goose
- Western Sandpiper

Colorado River Delta





Lower Colorado River Gadsden Riparian Area
Important Bird Area

