

Whitewater Draw State Wildlife Area

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| IBA web pages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://aziba.org/?page_id=698 • http://www.audubon.org/important-bird-areas/whitewater-draw-state-wildlife-area • Arizona Game and Fish Conservation Opportunity Area |
| Priority | Global |
| Qualifying Criteria | <p>A4iii: Concentration of $\geq 20,000$ waterbirds (Sandhill Crane)</p> <p>D1: Site Important to Special Status Avian Species (Bendire's Thrasher, Long-billed Curlew, Scaled Quail, Cassin's Sparrow)</p> <p>D4vi: Significant concentration of birds (Sandhill Cranes >2000)</p> <p>Bar Charts - eBird</p> |
| IBA Polygon Center Point (Latitude, Longitude) | 31.57°N, -109.72°W |
| Size | 1,509 acres |
| County | Cochise |
| Local Communities | Willcox, AZ McNeal, AZ |
| Description | <p>This IBA is dominated by an ephemeral lake, patchy marshlands, and semi-arid Chihuahuan Desert grassland and also contains two small patches of riparian habitat. The property was acquired by the Arizona Game and Fish Department in 1997 and past land uses include farming and ranching – with about thirty percent of the property being irrigated agriculture. Much of this farmland is being returned to native grasslands through rest and active reseeding projects. The surrounding agricultural community of the valley enhances feeding opportunities for wildlife including Sandhill Cranes.</p> |
| Mission/Goals | <p>The goals for management of the Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conserve and enhance sensitive wetland, grassland, and riparian habitat values associated with the Whitewater Draw Property for the benefit of waterfowl, migratory game birds and nongame birds, native amphibians, and reptiles. 2. Provide public access, for hunting and watchable wildlife-oriented recreational activities and provide opportunities for appropriate wildlife, oriented public education and research. 3. Provide additional and alternative roosting, feeding, and resting areas for migratory birds, especially waterfowl and Sandhill Cranes, beyond those currently available in the area. 4. Maintain water rights and water quality and abundance associated with the property, both surface and subterranean. |

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| Current Habitat Conservation, Planning, and Management Activities | <p>This IBA is managed by the Arizona Game and Fish Department to Meet the goals above. A fifty-acre portion is managed under a cooperatively developed project to install moist soil cells which may be flooded throughout the winter months.</p> <p>Over 600 acres are intermittently flooded to support the wetlands and two small patches of riparian habitat. A large portion of the Wildlife Area is comprised of native grasslands, most of which is being rehabilitated. The wetland and grassland communities on the wildlife area provide feeding and loafing sites for Sandhill Cranes, waterfowl, doves, and numerous other terrestrial game and nongame species including Plains Leopard Frogs, one of the most narrowly distributed of all leopard frogs in the state.</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>47.19 Semiarid/Sonoran Savannah Grassland (<i>Bendire's Thrasher</i>, <i>Scaled Quail</i>, <i>Cassin's Sparrow</i>, <i>Botteri's Sparrow</i>, <i>Baird's Sparrow</i>, <i>Grasshopper Sparrow</i>, , <i>Gray Hawk</i>, <i>Ferruginous Hawk</i>, <i>Peregrine Falcon</i>, <i>Sage Thrasher</i>, <i>Azure Bluebird</i>, <i>Burrowing Owl</i>, <i>Mountain Plover</i>)</p> <p>28.54 Freshwater Marsh, Riparian, and Open Water (<i>Long-billed Curlew</i>, <i>Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo</i>, <i>Southwestern Willow Flycatcher</i>, <i>Sandhill Crane</i>, <i>Bald Eagle</i>, <i>Clark's Grebe</i>, <i>Belted Kingfisher</i>, <i>Black-bellied Whistling Duck</i>, <i>Great Egret</i> <i>Snowy Egret</i>, <i>Peregrine Falcon</i>, <i>Osprey</i>, <i>Purple Martin</i>, <i>Red-naped Sapsucker</i>, <i>Lincoln's Sparrow</i>, <i>Yellow Warbler</i>)</p> <p>16.64 Chihuahuan Desertscrub (<i>Bendire's Thrasher</i>, <i>Peregrine Falcon</i>)</p> <p>4.48 Mesquite/Wash (<i>Bell's Vireo</i>, <i>Abert's Towhee</i>)</p> <p>3.14 Agriculture (<i>Long-billed Curlew</i>, <i>Sandhill Crane</i>, <i>Ferruginous Hawk</i>, <i>Burrowing Owl</i>)</p> <p>.83 Other (Sonoran Desertscrub: Lower Colorado River)</p> |
| Related Habitat Accounts* | <p>Low Grasslands</p> <p>Freshwater Marsh</p> <p>Lowland Riparian</p> <p>Sonoran Desert</p> |
| Biological Description | <p>This IBA is of state and regional significance as the primary wintering area for Sandhill Cranes (<i>Grus canadensis</i>) in Arizona, and includes both the Lesser (most numerous) and Greater subspecies.</p> <p>Whitewater Draw is in the southern Sulphur Springs Valley and cranes come from both the Rocky Mountain population and Mid-Continental population. The area also supports wintering Snow Geese (80-200) and a few Ross's Geese (occasional to 40). Counts of Sandhill Cranes in early January have steadily climbed from 4,000 in</p> |

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| | <p>1991 to over 22,000 in 2008 at Whitewater Draw with another 13,000 present 36 miles north in the Willcox Playa area, another 600 present in the far north of Sulphur Springs Valley at Bonita, AZ, and another 400 present in the Safford Valley near Duncan.</p> |
| <p>Focal Bird Species</p> <p>Bold Type are Road to Recovery species</p> | <p><u>IBA Qualifying Species</u></p> <p>Global: Sandhill Crane</p> <p>State: Bendire's Thrasher, Long-billed Curlew, Scaled Quail, Cassin's Sparrow</p> <p><u>AGFD Species of Greatest Conservation Need</u></p> <p>Tier 1: Peregrine Falcon, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Bald Eagle</p> <p>Tier 2: American Bittern, American Kestrel, Abert's Towhee, Azure Bluebird, Baird's Sparrow, Belted Kingfisher, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Botteri's Sparrow Broad-billed Hummingbird, Clark's Grebe, Common Black-Hawk, Ferruginous Hawk, Gilded Flicker, Grasshopper Sparrow, Great Egret, Gray Hawk, Hooded Oriole, Inca Dove, Killdeer, Lincoln's Sparrow, MacGillivray's Warbler (migration), Mountain Plover, Northern Beardless Tyrannulet, Olive-sided Flycatcher (migration), Pyrrhuloxia, Scott's Oriole, Purple Martin, Red-naped Sapsucker, Red-winged Blackbird, Savannah Sparrow (winter), Swainson's Hawk (migration), Verdin, Western Screech Owl, Western Burrowing Owl,</p> <p><u>Federal Threatened or Endangered Species</u></p> <p>Western Yellow-billed cuckoo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher</p> <p><u>USFWS Birds of Conservation Concern</u></p> <p>National – Bald Eagle, Swainson's Hawk, Peregrine Falcon, Mountain Plover, Solitary Sandpiper, Lesser Yellowlegs, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Loggerhead Shrike, Bell's Vireo, Bewick's Wren, Bendire's Thrasher, Lucy's Warbler, Brewer's Sparrow</p> <p>USFWS Region – Bald Eagle, Common Black-Hawk, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Lesser Yellowlegs, Short-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Curlew, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Burrowing Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, Bell's Vireo, Bendire's Thrasher, Lucy's Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Botteri's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Lark Bunting</p> |
| NABCI Bird Conservation Region | 34: Sierra Madre Occidental |

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| Ownership | Arizona Game and Fish Department |
| Conservation Land Status** | State Wildlife Area |
| Human Population Density | Rural |
| Legislative District(s) | Arizona Congressional District 2 and State Legislative District 14 |
| NRCS Major Land Resource Area | 53: Southeastern Arizona Basin and Range |
| Visitation, main access, and permits needed | <p>From Tucson, take I-10 east toward El Paso; merge onto AZ-80 east toward Tombstone/Douglas; turn left onto Davis Road; turn right onto North Central Highway; turn right onto west Bagby Road; turn right onto Coffman Road.</p> <p>To prevent catastrophic abandonment of the roost, posted portions of the area are closed to public entry from October 15 through March 15 annually. This closure has minimal impact on viewing opportunities</p> <p>Overnight public camping is allowed in designated areas only, for no more than three days within a seven day period. Camping is free; however, no utilities are available. There is a vault toilet on site. Open fires are allowed in designated areas only. Motorized vehicle travel is permitted on designated roads, on designated trails, or in designated areas only.</p> <p>To learn more, visit https://www.azgfd.com/wildlife/viewing/wheretogo/whitewater/.</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 |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--|---|
| Bird Monitoring | H | Sandhill Crane Winter Count | Annual survey coordinated by AGFD. Provide volunteers |
| Bird Monitoring | M | AZ IBA Surveys | TAS lead- Encourage eBird entries |
| Wildlife Monitoring | M | Motus Station | Maintenance and monitoring of on-site Motus station |
| IBA Signage | M | Install signs identifying the site as an IBA | Installed |
| IBA Dedication | Done | A formal recognition event | Completed January 2014 |
| Whitewater Draw WA | M | Update management opportunities | Coordinate with AGFD Tucson office Habitat Program |

Partners:

| Name | Role(s) | Contact Information | Actions |
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| Arizona Game and Fish Department | Willcox Wildlife Area Manager and Wings Over Willcox partner | Region V 555 N. Greasewood Rd. Tucson, AZ 85745 520-628-5376 | Management of Whitewater Draw WA |
| Tucson Bird Alliance | IBA Steward | 300 E University Blvd # 120, Tucson, AZ 85705 (520) 629-0510 Tucson Bird Alliance- We speak out for wild birds and their homes | Primary contact for birding and bird conservation activities and volunteer opportunities. |

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 |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Sandhill Crane | Very Good |
| Waterbirds and Shorebirds | Good |
| Waterfowl Birds | Good |
| Grassland and Upland 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 pose the greatest threats to birds within this IBA.

| Challenges | Upland and Grassland Birds | Waterfowl | Sandhill Crane | Waterbirds and Shorebirds | Summary Rating |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Groundwater Extraction | NA | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| Drought | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| Invasive Plants | Medium | Low | Low | Low | Low |
| Summary | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium | Medium |

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|-------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ratings: | | | | | |

| Whitewater Draw State Wildlife Area | | | | Severity (1-3) | Scope (1-3) | Permanence (2-4) |
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| Threats on National Database | | | | | | |
| Invasive species | Other | 6 | | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Natural events | Drought | 8 | | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Water Diversions (incl. impact dikes/dams) | Groundwater extraction | 8 | | 2 | 3 | 3 |

Whitewater Draw State Wildlife Area Important Bird Area

