

Welcome



Birding at Ghost Ranch

G25090303

with Raymond VanBuskirk

September 21-26, 2025

Greetings birding workshop-goers,

I'm looking forward to our time together at Ghost Ranch. Below is some information that I believe will be useful as you prepare for this birding experience. As this is a birding "class" we won't find ourselves spending much time indoors.

With that being said one of the most important aspects of enjoying this trip is to be prepared with proper clothing. Spring mornings at the ranch can be chilly (nighttime lows dipping near freezing) while afternoon temperatures can climb to the mid 50s and 60s (F) on average, or much higher. The NM sun is extreme, therefore sunburn is a constant concern at higher elevations, even in the cold. Clear skies and sunshine are very likely, but more than once I've been snowed on during May in northern NM. Layering and a wind layer will be essential to your comfort throughout the day. (Long underwear seems like overkill as mornings warm quickly).

Make sure you have sturdy pants; I typically wear jeans but many people prefer breathable hiking/outdoor pants. Shorts can be worn but be cautioned that New Mexico has many prickly plants. Light gloves, a beanie, and a hat to prevent sun overexposure are all useful. In addition to these clothing items you should be sure to bring sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots. We will spend a lot of time on our feet, occasionally on dirt hiking trails, and uneven surfaces, although much of the time we'll be on very manageable trails or roads. Some people find it useful to bring lightweight walking poles with hand straps (so you can use your binoculars without dropping your sticks) but I wouldn't consider this to be a requirement, most walks will be slow and easy. Ghost Ranch has some pairs to borrow.

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Dress is considered casual throughout, including meals (which are buffet style or sacked lunch). If you have any additional questions regarding clothing please reach out to Ghost Ranch staff.

I will be carrying a spotting scope for getting close looks at birds and other creatures, this will be available for the whole group to enjoy. Everyone should bring their own pair of binoculars if you have them. We do have a few loaner pairs that we are happy for you to borrow during your time here. We will need to get them back at the end of camp. If you are uncertain about how to properly adjust your binoculars for best viewing I can discuss this on the first day of our workshop.

Many people carry cameras these days, please feel free to bring those along, just don't forget your chargers and storage cards.

In an effort to reduce single-use plastic waste we ask that you bring a reusable water bottle for our outings. We will be able to refill them on the ranch and during field trips. It's very easy to get dehydrated in the desert, especially at elevation. This is an essential gear item!. In addition to staying hydrated, wearing (and reapplying) sunscreen can reduce the risk of sun-related issues so please don't forget your sunscreen.

Please bring a small flashlight or headlight for navigating walking paths after dark during our owling excursion. We have some extras if needed. Flashlights that include a red light function are best. Again, the ranch has a few.

Please feel free to bring a notebook for jotting notes, sketching, and questions for later. We will have notebooks if you would prefer ours.

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Here's a general overview of our daily schedule, these times may shift slightly, one way or the other, depending on any number of unforeseen circumstances. We'll discuss plans every evening at a brief meeting to review the day and plan for the next.

Breakfast: 7:30-8:30am

Outdoor birding instruction: 8:45am-12:00pm

Lunch: 12:00-1:00pm

Personal time to enjoy the ranch/rest/hike/etc: 1:00-5:15pm

Dinner: 5:30-6:30pm

*Evening program: 6:45-7:45pm

*On at least one evening our program will be an owling trip to see if we can find some of the ranch's nocturnal inhabitants.

If you find that you still have questions about our schedule or what to bring please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly.

On the first evening of the workshop (after dinner) we'll have a group discussion that will include more details about our daily birding schedule/programs and will include some discussions about group birding behavior and workshop expectations and goals. Our first official group meet-up will be at the mess hall for dinner on the 7th. After dinner we'll travel together to our group meeting room for the informational meeting.

Cheer and good birding,

Raymond L VanBuskirk

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