



Birding at Ghost Ranch

G26040405

with Raymond VanBuskirk

April 27 – May 1, 2026

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 for you to feel prepared for the upcoming birding experience. While this is a "birding class" we won't find ourselves spending much time indoors, except for a few of our evenings.

With that being said one of the most important aspects of enjoying this trip is to be prepared with proper clothing. Spring mornings in the southern Rocky Mountains can be chilly with nighttime lows dipping near freezing, while afternoon temperatures can climb to the mid 50s and 60s (F) on average, but potentially much higher. The NM sun is extreme, therefore sunburn is a constant concern, even in the cold, and especially at higher elevations. While clear skies and sunshine are very likely, more than once I've been snowed on during May in northern NM. The takeaway is that layering will be essential to your comfort. I typically start layering with a breathable base layer, this could function well as a stand-alone layer later in the day as it warms up. I follow that with a warm insulating layer such as a sweater, fleece or vest. As your outermost layer, consider a waterproof or at least water resistant layer just in case we receive precipitation, this outer layer also functions to cut the spring winds. Long underwear seems like overkill as mornings warm quickly, just



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

I will be carrying a spotting scope for getting up 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 are uncertain about how to properly adjust your binoculars for best viewing I can discuss this on the first day of our workshop. If you do not have a pair of binoculars we can provide a loaner pair which you can use for the duration of the 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 higher elevations. This is considered 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.



Birding Supply List

Please bring a small flashlight or headlight for navigating walking paths after dark during our birding excursion. We have some extras if needed. Flashlights that include a red light function are best. We will provide you with a notebook and a pen and pencil for jotting down notes, thoughts, questions, changes to schedule, sketching birds, etc. Please feel free to bring your own notebook if you prefer. A small day pack is helpful to carry all of your gear. We will be fed three delicious meals a day, but outside of breakfast, lunch, and dinner you should be prepared with whatever your favorite snacks are to enjoy in the field. Nuts, dried fruit, and granola bars are all easy, packable trail snacks.

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: Optional morning birdwalk: 6:00-7:00am 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 the Ghost Ranch staff who should be able to answer any of your questions or relay any questions they can't answer to me directly. On the first evening of the workshop 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.



Cheer and good birding,
Raymond L VanBuskirk

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