

Western Rivers Action Network

Protecting rivers across the Colorado River Basin



Yellow-billed Cuckoo.
Photo: Mary Miguez/Audubon Photography Awards



Gila River Basin.
Photo: Knusser, Wikimedia Commons



Yuma Ridgway's Rail.
Photo: Emerald Louise

The Gila River

- The Gila River is the **second largest tributary to the Colorado River.**
- **Over 90% of the Gila River watershed, covering nearly 60,000 square miles, is in Arizona.**
- **In 2008, American Rivers listed the Gila as one of the nation's top ten most endangered rivers.**
- **Damming, diversions, and groundwater pumping on the Gila and its tributaries have reduced the historic discharge of the river into the Colorado from just under 2,000 cfs to just under 300 cfs.**
- **Of the 572 miles of the Gila River found in Arizona, only 162 still see year-round flow.**

- Nearly half of Arizona is within the Gila River watershed. This means **decisions on many of Arizona's rivers, including the San Pedro, Santa Cruz, Salt, and Agua Fria, ultimately affect the health of the Gila.**
- **The Salt River, which now runs dry through much of metropolitan Phoenix, was once the Gila River's most significant tributary.**
- The globally-designated **Lower Salt and Gila Rivers Ecosystem Important Bird Area** is home to the federally protected Yuma Ridgway's Rail, a phenomenal abundance of fish-eating birds like herons and osprey, and one of the largest populations of Abert's Towhee in the United States.
- **The 23,000 acre Gila Box National Riparian Conservation Area supports a diversity of wildlife** including over 200 species of birds, six federally endangered native fish species, and bighorn sheep.

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The Gila River:

More Information:

- [Audubon Arizona](#) az.audubon.org
- [Western Rivers Action Network - Arizona](#) az.audubon.org/western-rivers-action-network-0
- [Tucson Audubon Society](#) tucsonaudubon.org
- [Maricopa Audubon Society](#) maricopaaudubon.org
- [Sonoran Audubon Society](#) sonoranaudubon.org
- [Desert Rivers Audubon Society](#) desertriversaudubon.org
- [Yuma Audubon Society](#) audubonyuma.org
- [Trout Unlimited - Arizona](#) az-tu.org
- [Arizona Wildlife Federation](#) azwildlife.org
- [Lower Salt and Gila Rivers Ecosystem Important Bird Area](#) aziba.org