

Western Rivers Action Network

Protecting rivers across the Colorado River Basin



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



Photo: Knusser, Wikimedia Commons



Vermilion Flycatcher.
Photo: Mick Thompson

The Santa Cruz River

- The over 8,000 square mile Santa Cruz River watershed covers 10% of Arizona and includes Tucson.
- The Santa Cruz is a river of international significance, heading south from its headwaters in Arizona's San Rafael Valley, making a 25-mile loop through Sonora, Mexico, and returning to the United States near Nogales.
- Extensive groundwater pumping for municipal and agricultural use has resulted in no flow conditions along many of the Santa Cruz's once perennial and intermittent reaches.
- Water pumping in the Santa Cruz watershed has dropped the water table beneath Tucson by 250 feet, draining the majority of the springs and cienegas that once existed between Tubac and Tucson.
- The majority of the perennially flowing reaches of the Santa Cruz receive their flow from treated wastewater that is returned to the river.
- There are four wastewater treatment plants releasing treated effluent into the Santa Cruz River - one in Santa Cruz County and three in Pima County.
- The Santa Cruz watershed contains eight designated Wilderness Areas and supports 22 threatened and endangered species including the Sonoran tiger salamander, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, and Gila topminnow.
- The Upper Santa Cruz River Important bird Area supports several species of concern that are rare in the United States including nesting Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Gray Hawk.

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The Santa Cruz 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
- [Huachuca Audubon Society](#) huachuca-audubon.org
- [Sonoran Audubon Society](#) sonoranaudubon.org
- [Trout Unlimited - Arizona](#) az-tu.org
- [Arizona Wildlife Federation](#) azwildlife.org
- [Upper Santa Cruz River IBA](#) aziba.org
- [Friends of the Santa Cruz River](#) friendsofsantacruzriver.org