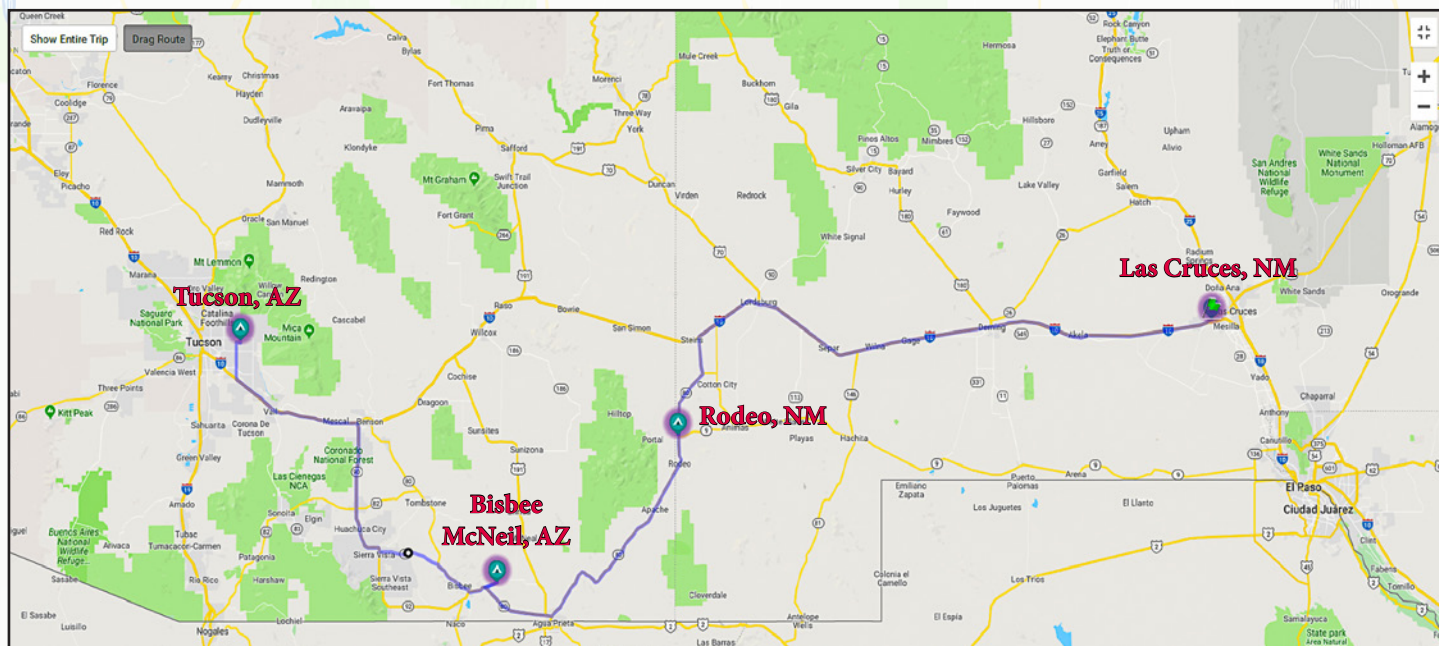




POULSBO TO TUCSON, 2018

PART III - (LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO TO TUCSON, ARIZONA)



Rodeo, New Mexico

Our next stop was at an RV park near Rodeo, New Mexico. On the east side of the Chiricahua Mountains, this area is well known for birding and astronomy. There is an entire community of homes called Arizona Sky Village, where most homes have one or more observatories attached.

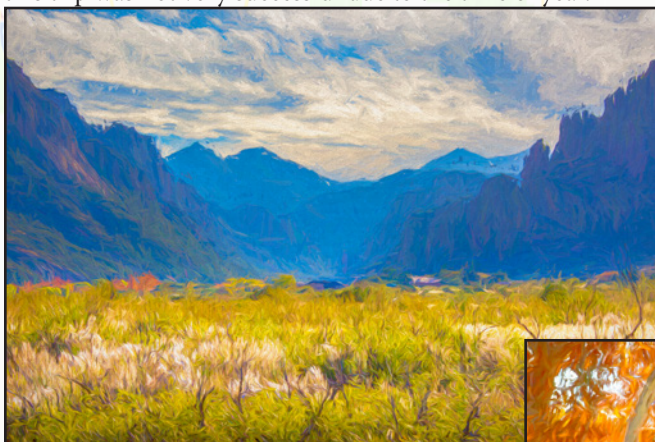


Even some of the motorhomes in the RV park had telescopes set up. Rules in the RV park were no exterior lights at night and pull the shades down to stop your motorhome from leaking light! This entire part of New Mexico and Arizona is considered a dark area so that astronomy can be done here with the least amount of light contamination as possible.



From this RV park, the Chiricahua Mountains were just to the west of us. We took several drives up and into them.

On this side at the base of the Chiricahua Mountains there is a small village called Portal. The Portal area is a prime birding area. Our birding in that area this trip was not very successful due to the time of year.



One morning I flew my drone for the morning sunrise on the Chiricahua Desert. You can click the photograph to the right to see it. (NOTE: It is a 77 MB file)



I'd read about some nearby airport ruins of sorts called the Rodeo Intermediate Field. It was developed in support of very early commercial aviation along a route from California to the east. Early transport and mail aviation relied on the iron compass as a navigational aid. As well, the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad running from Douglas to El Paso was an ideal navigational aid along a southern route. Other intermediate field routes were established across the U.S. and in New Mexico an early route also extended across the northern part of the state through Albuquerque.

Standard Airlines, to become TWA, began flights from California to El Paso in 1929 as an Air-Rail line to El Paso then continue by train east from El Paso. In support of this commercial activity the Department of Commerce had been locating a series of "intermediate fields" along these air routes. Located 40-50 miles apart these intermediate fields provided a measure of safety for early commercial airlines in cases of mechanical or weather related problems. Of particular interest to me (for no really good reason other than curiosity) were these large concrete arrows poured into the desert floor that airplanes could see from above and pointed the way to the next "intermediate airport".

Along the southern routes air traffic converged on Phoenix and Tucson then proceeded via Douglas around the Chiricahua mountains and up the San Simon Valley to Antelope pass where air traffic would again turn east following the rail line to the "planeport" in El Paso. Passing the Rodeo Intermediate Field early air traffic then continued via other "intermediate fields" before arriving in El Paso.

After WWII the need for "intermediate fields" disappeared. Although still in use after the war the Rodeo Intermediate Field began its return to nature. As it sits today the Rodeo Intermediate Field lies on BLM land on the east side of New Mexico Highway 9 just east a couple miles of the historical marker located at the intersection of Highway 80 and Highway 9. The historical marker gave me clues to where it was, but it took a couple of trips driving back and forth in the area to spot it. I had thought the large concrete arrows poured into the earth would be very large and easy to find but in reality they were not nearly as large as I'd imagined and proved invisible from the highway due to the surrounding brush.





There were a couple small museums just down the road. One was a snake museum which we had no trouble in passing up... until after a number of trips past, our (*my*) curiosity got the better of me.

There were plenty of live snakes behind glass and more snake related art, crafts and memorabilia than I have ever seen in one place before... maybe more than in *all* the places we've seen combined!

The portrait of the fellow in the lounge chair, smoking a cigarette, with a snake in his lap was said to be the provocateur and instigator of the place. He was not invited to the Morning Situation Room or afternoon AA (Attitude Adjustment) meetings.



Just to the south of Rodeo is Apache, where this monument related to the September 6, 1886 surrender of Geronimo in nearby Skeleton Canyon stands along the New Mexico Highway 80.



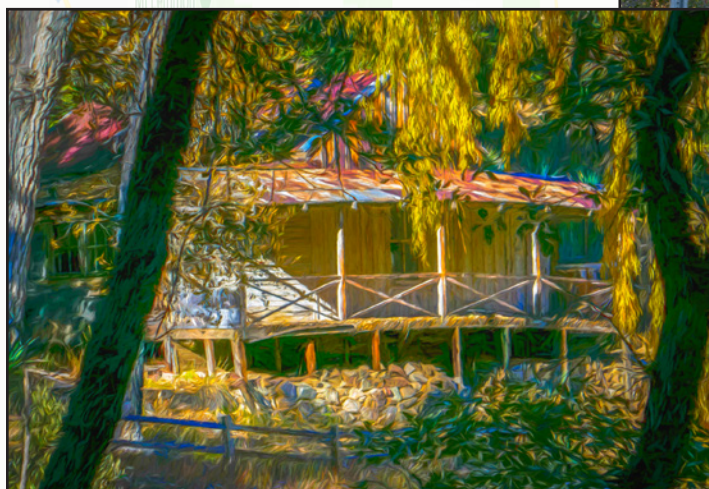


Bisbee ~ Double Adobe, Arizona

Our next stop was an RV park between Bisbee and Double Adobe, Arizona. We choose this one due to it's proximity to Whitewater Draw, a great birding area for the wintering Sandhill cranes and other birds. It was an easy 10 mile drive into Bisbee and centrally located for easy day trips to several other places we wanted see.

This kind of "travel caution" sign was pretty common once we got off the main roads.

On our day trips we would typically find lots of old buildings for artistic inspiration.





Lowell, Arizona

Lowell is a very unique and special part of Bisbee. It's own town until the early 1900s when it was incorporated into Bisbee, Lowell was at one time a sizable mining town located just to the southeast of Old Bisbee. The majority of the original townsite was consumed by the excavation of the Lavender Pit mine during the 1950s.

All that is left today is a small portion of Erie Street, along with Evergreen Cemetery, Saginaw subdivision and Lowell Middle School. These days Lowell is considered by most of the local residents to be more of a place name than an actual community.

I have always enjoyed Lowell for it's nostalgia. This trip I took a little extra time looking for inspiration and working for the next few pages of images, I hope you enjoy them.







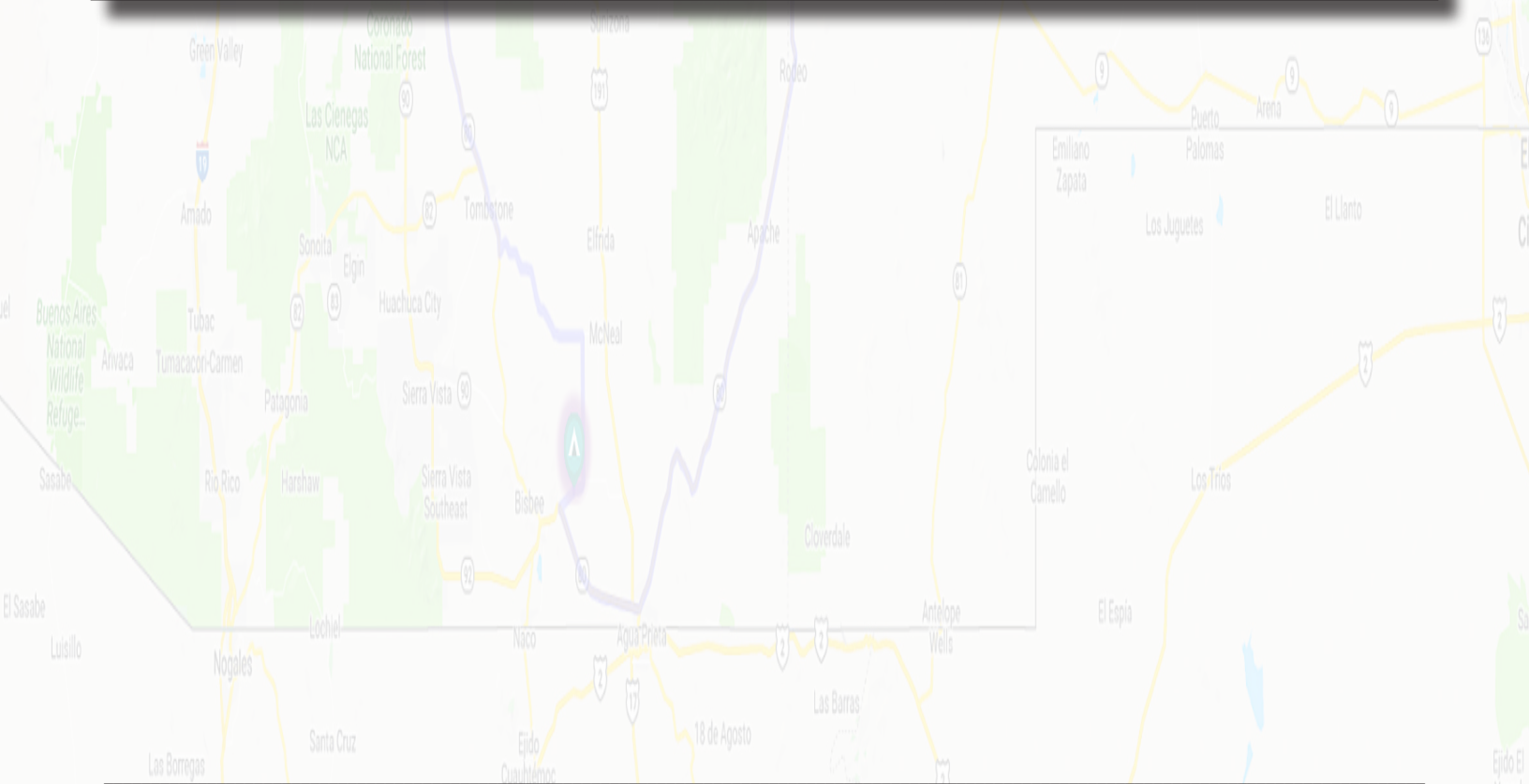


















One day trip took us along the border east of Douglas, to the historic Slaughter Ranch. It was supposed to be a good birding place and rare birds are frequently seen there.

While we didn't see much it was an interesting place where we enjoyed the scenery, and atmosphere that has been left largely untouched since Texas John Slaughter's time.

We had not seen this kind of border fencing before. It was pretty simple compared to other areas we have seen over the years and did not seem much of a challenge to those wanting to pass over the border. There was however, a much larger presence of border patrol agents, vehicles and technology than areas with more substantial fencing and walls.

The caretakers at the ranch, which is actually on the border itself, told us that many times, before they ever see anyone, the border patrol calls them and advises them someone is crossing the border onto their ranch.

You can find out more about the Slaughter Ranch by clicking this link: <https://www.slaughterranch.com>





On December 1st, 2018 we continued onto Tucson where we spent the rest of the winter. We headed back to Poulsbo on April 7th, 2019. We only took a bit over a week to get from Tucson to Poulsbo this year as the weather was less than nice for much adventure seeking. For us, that is really jetting it back via MoHo, (remember, we took two months getting down to Tucson).

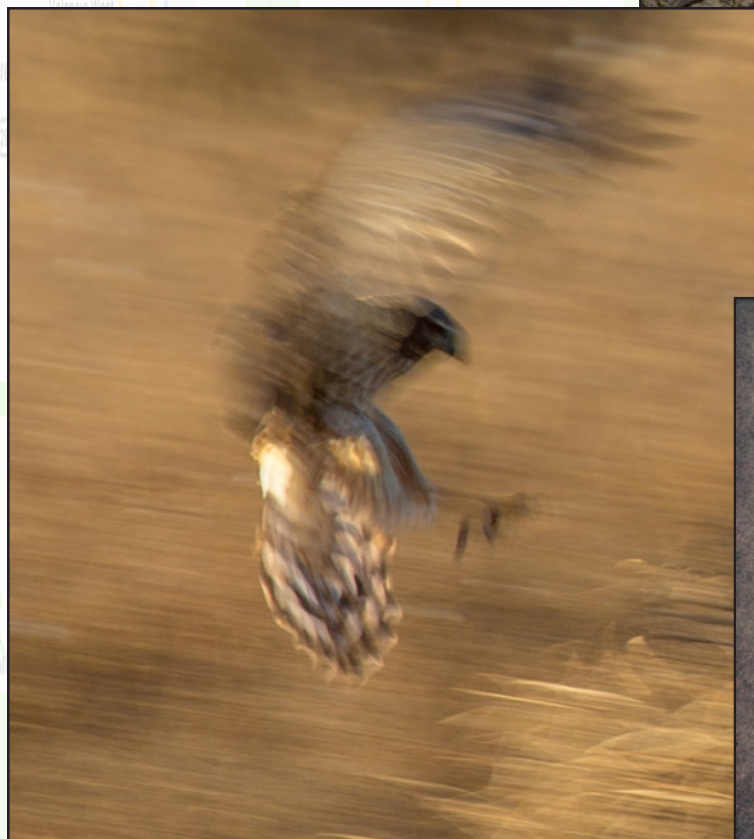
Anyway, there will be no *Flying Pig Adventures* travelogue about our return trip. However, we do have another two in the works. One of our birding trip to Costa Rica last February and another we need to catch up on about our days in Amsterdam last summer.

And by the time those are done, we should have something to say about our upcoming August trip to Ecuador, (Ecuadorian Amazonia, the Galápagos Islands, and the Andes of southern Ecuador).

The rest of this *Flying Pig Adventures* is bird images from our stops in this issue.



Red-Tailed Hawk



Inbound raptor



Cooper's Hawk



Sandhill Cranes



Western Screech-Owl



Gila Woodpecker

.END