



# AZFO eBird Gaps Project

## BE PREPARED BEFORE YOU GO

Since you will be visiting more remote areas, it is important to be prepared before you leave home. For each of the five eBird Gaps areas we will provide maps, information on access, and any permits needed, but here is a list of other details to keep in mind when going into the field:

**Let someone know where you are going** and when you are expected to return. Going with a birding buddy is also recommended if you are going somewhere remote. Make sure your cell phone is charged.

**Bring maps** showing major and minor roads. This includes paved highways or streets, graded dirt or gravel roads (e.g. National Forest, BLM, or tribal roads), and 4WD/jeep tracks. Our Featured Gaps maps can be downloaded onto a mobile device using the Avenza app. Looking at the planned routes ahead of time on maps is also useful, as you can see general topography, habitat boundaries (desert vs. wooded areas), drainages, possible gates, etc.

**Check weather forecasts** before you go. Flash floods can happen in any low-lying areas or drainages, even if it is raining miles away in the mountains that feed the watershed, but not at your spot. Do not attempt to cross any flooding water by foot or by vehicle.

**Don't park over dry vegetation and be careful with ignition sources.** Arizona's peak fire risk time is during the dry season from late April to July, although this can extend through August for areas that don't receive any monsoon precipitation. Annual grasses and flowers produced during winter and spring rains dry out in this period and are fuel for any sparks. Be careful when parking your vehicle to make sure no dry vegetation is touching the underside of your vehicle. If you smoke, use your vehicle's ash tray and do not discard it outside

**Check road conditions.** Know the limits of your vehicle and what roads it can and can't handle. If you have a low-clearance vehicle, you may need to safely park off to the side and hike in from there.

**Obey all posted signs and don't trespass.** If it is unclear whether an area is inaccessible or you know it to be private land, either go somewhere else or try to ask permission from the landowner. We are all ambassadors for the birding community and the actions of unethical birders can lead to previously accessible areas being closed. Respect all posted signs regarding land ownership, rules and regulations.

**Use common sense and be safe.** If you encounter a potentially dangerous situation, it's best to avoid it. Whether the possible threat is other people, feral dogs, rattlesnakes, black bears, mountain lions, livestock, wildfires, rough roads, or inclement weather, avoid situations that you don't need to be in.