

Blue-throated Hummingbird (*Lampornis clemenciae*)
or **Rivoli's Hummingbird** (*Eugenes fulgens*) Female

She makes a series of short flights that appear to be a display to the male before copulation. —*allaboutbirds.org*

While sitting in the hammock by Bear Creek I saw a large plain hummingbird fly from near the top of a large Plains cottonwood (*Populus detoides*) and display by flying up vertically a short way then descend to its starting point. It repeated approximately three times and then returned to the tree. I managed to get just this one telephoto at x60.



I and my camera could see the wings well enough, not just a blur as with smaller hummingbirds; Blue-throats beat at 23/sec. After much reading and comparing I decided on Blue-throated due to her size, slower wing beat, larger range in the SW US, and primarily her aerial display dance—the male just sings—despite Rivoli's being sighted there. Though because the two species are known to hybridize she could be both.

Phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*) Male

Soon after seeing the Blue-throated hummer I spied a Phainopepla glossy black with top knot sitting on a high bare branch. Again I had time for only one shot, but as he flew off I saw the definitive white wing patches. I had not seen one for decades not having been tramping through his southern deserts since first coming into the west in 1970 and through the early 80s.

Seeing him brings to mind many fond memories of past sojourns into the deserts of New Mexico: the vanishing sun setting fire to red rocks and a lone ancient Piñon under which I camped; Arizona: a Desert Kit Fox, while I lay watching from my sleeping bag, chewing a hole into my backpack to get at the beef jerky I kept there, then disappearing into the darkening desert; and California: an idyllic romantic camp under some date palms by a water hole of the mostly subterranean Amargosa River as it surfaced at Death Valley before disappearing into the aquifer below and so many more such remembrances which accompany me in my stumbling advance toward my own oblivion.

