

DEC 6-12, 2026

## Bosque del Apache

PHOTOGRAPHY PLAN

# Bosque del Apache, Dec 6-12, 2026

Arrive Sunday, scout if there is light, shoot five full on-site days from Monday through Friday, and leave Saturday with backups complete. The plan is organized around sunrise, mid-morning, and sunset because the refuge changes faster than a fixed schedule.

**Dec 6**

Arrival and scout

**Dec 7-11**

Five full photo days

**Dec 12**

Departure and backups

**6:10 AM**

Typical target parking time

**3:35 PM**

Typical sunset arrival time

**12 mi**

Auto Tour Loop planning distance

**1 hr before**

Auto loop opens before sunrise

**\$5**

Daily private vehicle entrance fee

#### PRIMARY DECISION

**Sony 200-600 is back in the center of the recommendation.**

The earlier plan underweighted the Sony FE 200-600mm. Current wildlife and safari research supports treating it as the classic Sony long wildlife lens, especially for Tanzania. For Bosque it is a strong primary long zoom; for Tanzania it pairs naturally with a 70-200mm f/2.8 on a second body.

#### SITE ARCHITECTURE

**Photography map and lodging map are separate.**

The main map now only shows photo-relevant refuge locations. Hotel comparisons and a hotel-distance map live under Lodging, where they belong.

#### PRACTICE

**Train the whole workflow.**

The practice section now starts with camera modes and ends with homework, backups, cold-weather readiness, and explicit standards before departure.

PHOTOGRAPHY-ONLY

MAP

# Refuge Shooting Map

Lodging has been removed from this map. This tab is for sunrise, mid-morning, sunset, field-position, and refuge-logistics decisions only.

## Visitor Center

Start here when open for current water, road, roost, and closure intelligence. Visitor Center hours currently show Thu-Mon, 9 AM-4 PM.

mid-morning

intel

official FWS

## North Crane Pond parking

Primary crane-pool scout for dawn lift-off and evening returns. Verify legal pullouts, signs, wind direction, and active birds each day.

sunrise

sunset

planning pin

## South Crane Pond north pullout

Alternate crane-pool angle for reflection, landing lanes, and mountain bands. Use only legal parking, and stay clear of the railroad and shoulders.

sunrise

sunset

planning pin

## South Crane Pond south pullout

Good for adjusting against wind and light when the north pullout is crowded or the birds stage farther south.

sunrise

sunset

planning pin

## Flight Deck / Main Pool

Classic snow-geese blast-off position when Main Pool has water and birds. Scout the afternoon before committing a sunrise here.

sunrise

sunset

planning pin

### **Dabbling Deck**

South Loop ducks, coots, reeds, reflections, slower practice, and clean habitat frames after the first fly-out.

mid-morning

planning pin

### **Eagle Scout Deck**

A calmer wetland viewpoint for ducks, geese, reeds, reflections, and exposure practice on bright birds.

mid-morning

planning pin

### **Willow Deck**

North Loop wetland work with long-lens compression. Keep tripod legs compact if other visitors are present.

mid-morning

planning pin

### **Coyote Deck**

Pair with Willow Deck for ducks, distant cranes, raptors, and habitat images when the crop-field action slows.

mid-morning

planning pin

### **Farm Deck / North Loop fields**

Use after fly-out for feeding cranes/geese, raptors, and flight lines. Field access and bird placement change with management activity.

mid-morning

sunset

planning pin

### **Rio Viejo / Bike Trail parking**

Short-walk change of pace for marsh birds, passerines, quail, roadrunner, and texture work. Potable water is not assumed on the loop.

mid-morning

planning pin

CALENDAR PLAN

# Itinerary

Arrive December 6, shoot five full days, and leave December 12. Each day includes the purpose of the day so the plan adapts cleanly to water, wind, crowds, and bird movement.

Sun Dec 6  
Arrival

Mon Dec 7  
On-site Day 1

Tue Dec 8  
On-site Day 2

Wed Dec 9  
On-site Day 3

Thu Dec 10  
On-site Day 4

Fri Dec 11  
On-site Day 5

Sat Dec 12  
Departure

## SUN DEC 6 / ARRIVAL

**Arrive, settle the room, and use any remaining light for a no-pressure scout.**

Do not make the arrival day carry the trip. The job is to confirm the drive time, fuel, food, cold-weather workflow, and the first sunrise target.

## AFTERNOON

After arrival

### Socorro hotel / San Antonio route check

Unload, charge batteries, stage layers, and set the vehicle so the first morning is frictionless.

**Gear:** Keep one body with 24-105 and one body with the long zoom mounted before sleep.

### Position

Drive the route once in daylight if possible. Fill fuel before evening.

## **SUNSET**

Arrive by 3:40 PM if timing allows

### **North or South Crane Pond**

Scout active roosts, parking, light angle, and wind. A clean scouting note is more valuable than forcing a keeper.

**Gear:** 24-105 for context; Sony 200-600 or Canon 100-500 for bird placement.

### **Position**

Stay in legal pullouts only. Mark which side of the road gives the better mountain and reflection background.

REPLAN BY LIGHT

# Photo Windows

Use this when conditions override the day-by-day itinerary. Each window now carries more daily context so it works as a field decision tool.

Sunrise

Mid-morning

Sunset

MON DEC 7 / ON-SITE DAY 1

## Highway 1 crane pools

Cranes lifting from shallow water, cold breath, reflections, and first wind-direction notes.

**Field note:** Pre-compose two frames: a tight crane lane and a wide reflection/sky frame. Birds usually depart into wind.

Sunrise

Lock the active roosts and establish the morning rhythm.

TUE DEC 8 / ON-SITE DAY 2

## Flight Deck / Main Pool or strongest roost repeat

Snow-goose blast-off, flock shapes, sound, sky color, and a wide-to-long sequence.

**Field note:** Start wider than instinct. Switch longer only after the flock breaks into readable shapes.

Sunrise

Go for the classic blast-off, then follow feeding patterns.

WED DEC 9 / ON-SITE DAY 3

## Best crane-pool repeat

Takeoff runs, head/neck focus, cold-air atmosphere, and controlled panning bursts.

**Field note:** Watch for neck stretch, wing stretch, head bobbing, and crouch. Start tracking before the bird commits.

Sunrise

Behavior, repetition, and cleaner backgrounds.

THU DEC 10 / ON-SITE DAY 4

## South Loop wetland stretch

Mist, reeds, ducks, geese, harriers, and early rim light through habitat.

**Field note:** Work slowly toward Dabbler Deck. Let layered habitat become part of the image.

Sunrise

Habitat, marsh texture, and slower seeing.

FRI DEC 11 / ON-SITE DAY 5

## Best current roost repeat

Use everything learned: wind, light, background, behavior cues, and pre-focused lanes.

**Field note:** Commit to one high-yield spot. The final morning is not the moment to chase a completely new location.

Sunrise

Repeat the strongest setup and finish deliberately.

Socorro remains the photography-first base. This section now includes a hotel-specific map and links or previews for each hotel photo source without putting lodging into the main photography map.

1

## Official hotel photos

### Comfort Inn & Suites Socorro

Socorro

25-30 min

Dec 6-12 snapshot: from \$722 total

#### Best safe/value default

Interior-corridor chain option with breakfast, Wi-Fi, parking, microwave/fridge, indoor pool/hot tub, and the strongest value fit in the current snapshot.

Lowest rates can be nonrefundable. Verify direct refundable total, cancellation time, and recent room-specific reviews before booking.

[Official hotel photos](#)

2

## Official hotel gallery

### Best Western Socorro Hotel & Suites

Socorro

25-30 min

Dec 6-12 snapshot: from \$726 total

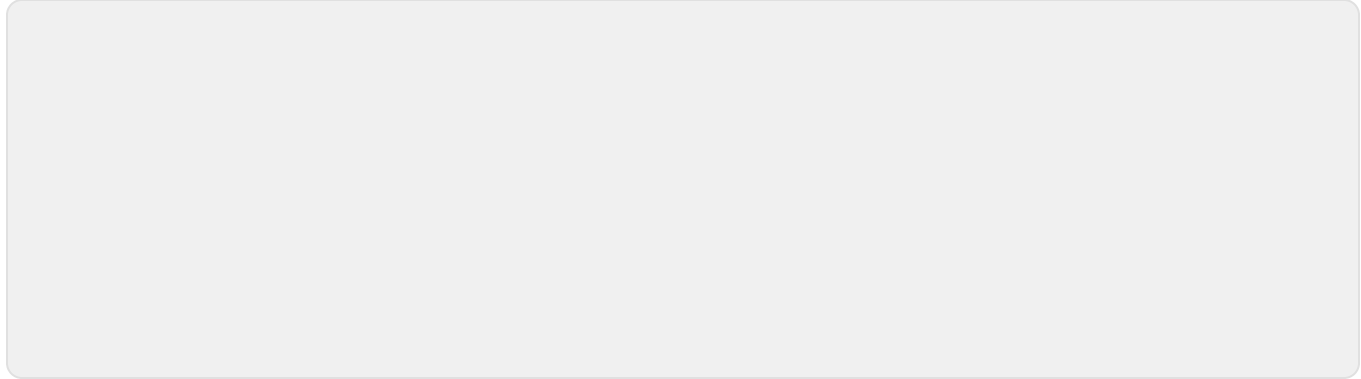
#### Strong value backup

Free breakfast and parking, indoor pool, pet-friendly rooms available, and convenient Socorro fuel/food access.

Slightly weaker review profile than the top choice. Recheck noise, room type, and cancellation terms.

[Official hotel gallery](#)

3



## Holiday Inn Express Socorro by IHG

Socorro

25-30 min

Dec 6-12 snapshot: from \$1,181 total

### Cleanest low-friction chain choice

Reliable chain experience, breakfast listed 6:00-9:30 AM, indoor pool, free Wi-Fi, and easy Socorro logistics.

Materially more expensive in the snapshot. Worth it only if direct refundable pricing tightens or comfort premium matters.

[IHG room photo](#)

4

## Expedia hotel photos

### Econo Lodge Inn & Suites Socorro

Socorro

25-30 min

Dec 6-12 snapshot: from \$631 total

#### Cheapest acceptable fallback

Budget fallback with free parking and breakfast. It keeps the dawn drive reasonable if prices jump elsewhere.

Expect motel tradeoffs in finish, sound, and comfort. Inspect 2026 reviews before committing.

[Expedia hotel photos](#)

5

## Property website

### **Casa Blanca Bed and Breakfast**

San Antonio

12-15 min

Posted \$100-\$120/night; direct availability required

### **Closest birding-oriented base**

Closest lodging option, refuge-savvy hosts, and very short pre-dawn commute if the room and terms work.

Availability requires direct contact. Cash/check and winter cancellation terms may be less convenient than a chain hotel.

[Property website](#)

6

Bonvoy

## Marriott photo gallery

### Fairfield by Marriott Inn & Suites Los Lunas

Los Lunas

~1 hr 20 min

Dec 6-12 snapshot: from \$1,003 total

### Marriott Bonvoy tradeoff

Closest practical Bonvoy option found, with free breakfast, free parking, fitness center, and newer-property appeal.

Not a photography-first base. A 6:10 AM setup means leaving around 4:20 AM, so use only if points/status outweigh the commute.

[Marriott photo gallery](#)

#### HOTEL DISTANCE MAP

## Hotels vs. Bosque

This map is intentionally lodging-only, with the refuge visitor center as the reference point.

### 1. Comfort Inn & Suites Socorro

Interior-corridor chain option with breakfast, Wi-Fi, parking, microwave/fridge, indoor pool/hot tub, and the strongest value fit in the current snapshot.

Socorro

25-30 min

## 2. Best Western Socorro Hotel & Suites

Free breakfast and parking, indoor pool, pet-friendly rooms available, and convenient Socorro fuel/food access.

Socorro

25-30 min

## 3. Holiday Inn Express Socorro by IHG

Reliable chain experience, breakfast listed 6:00-9:30 AM, indoor pool, free Wi-Fi, and easy Socorro logistics.

Socorro

25-30 min

## 4. Econo Lodge Inn & Suites Socorro

Budget fallback with free parking and breakfast. It keeps the dawn drive reasonable if prices jump elsewhere.

Socorro

25-30 min

## 5. Casa Blanca Bed and Breakfast

Closest lodging option, refuge-savvy hosts, and very short pre-dawn commute if the room and terms work.

San Antonio

12-15 min

## 6. Fairfield by Marriott Inn & Suites Los Lunas

Closest practical Bonvoy option found, with free breakfast, free parking, fitness center, and newer-property appeal.

Los Lunas

~1 hr 20 min

CAMERA

KIT  
**Gear** Every current gear item now has size/weight/filter/aperture/stabilization information where applicable, plus a photo or official photo reference link.

LENS DECISION UPDATE

## **The Sony 200-600 is a real recommendation.**

For Bosque, it should sit beside the 100-400 and 400-800 as a primary long-lens option. For Tanzania, the clean default is one body with the 200-600 and a second body with the 70-200 f/2.8 or 24-105 depending the day.

**16**

gear items

**77 / 82 / 95 / 105**

filter sizes

Sony

Canon

Support

SONY

## FE 24-105mm F4 G OSS

Wide story, habitat, weather, flock scale

LENGTH  
113.3 mm

FILTER  
77 mm

WEIGHT  
663 g

APERTURE  
f/4-f/22

STABILIZATION  
Optical SteadyShot

Keep this on a second body for blast-off scale, mountain bands, refuge context, and travel scenes.

[Sony product/spec page](#) [Specs](#)



SONY

**FE 24-70mm F2.8 GM II**

Travel, people, low light, shallow depth of field

LENGTH  
119.9 mm

FILTER  
82 mm

WEIGHT  
695 g

APERTURE  
f/2.8-f/22

STABILIZATION  
No lens OSS; body-integrated stabilization

Useful outside the refuge, but the 24-105 is the better Bosque standard zoom because 70-105 mm matters for scale.

[Sony product photo](#) [Specs](#)

SONY

## FE 70-200mm F2.8 GM OSS II

Close wildlife, portraits, camp/travel compression, Tanzania second body

LENGTH  
200 mm

FILTER  
77 mm

WEIGHT  
1,045 g without tripod mount

APERTURE  
f/2.8-f/22

STABILIZATION  
Optical SteadyShot

Not the main Bosque bird lens, but it becomes much more important on Tanzania for close mammals and low-light vehicle work.

[Sony product photo](#) [Specs](#)

SONY

## FE 100-400mm F4.5-5.6 GM OSS

Lighter handheld flight zoom and close-pass lens

LENGTH  
205 mm

FILTER  
77 mm

WEIGHT  
1,395 g without tripod mount

APERTURE  
f/4.5-5.6 to f/32-40

STABILIZATION  
Optical SteadyShot

Excellent when birds are close, light is dim, or the 200-600 is too heavy for fast acquisition.

[Sony product photo](#) [Specs](#)

SONY

## FE 200-600mm F5.6-6.3 G OSS

Primary Sony wildlife reach for Bosque and classic Tanzania setup

LENGTH

318 mm

FILTER

95 mm

WEIGHT

2,115 g

APERTURE

f/5.6-6.3 to f/32-36

STABILIZATION

Optical SteadyShot

Correction to the earlier plan: this should be a first-class recommendation, not a fallback. It is the cleanest Sony one-body wildlife lens for Tanzania and a strong Bosque bird lens.

[Sony product photo](#) [Specs](#)

SONY

## FE 400-800mm F6.3-8 G OSS

Distant birds, distant cats, and bright-good-light reach

LENGTH  
346 mm

FILTER  
105 mm

WEIGHT  
2,475 g

APERTURE  
f/6.3-8 to f/36-45

STABILIZATION  
Optical SteadyShot

A specialized long-reach lens. Excellent for Bosque distance and birds, but too narrow and slow to be the automatic Tanzania primary.

[Sony product/spec page](#) [Specs](#)

SONY

## SEL14TC 1.4x Teleconverter

Good-light reach extension

LENGTH

33.6 mm

FILTER

None

WEIGHT

167 g

APERTURE

Loses 1 stop

STABILIZATION

N/A; lens/body stabilization still matters

Use after light improves. Avoid frequent mounting in dust, and do not make it the dawn default.

[Sony product photo](#) [Specs](#)

PACK GUIDANCE

## Lens and filter decisions

These recommendations are tuned for Bosque first and Tanzania second.

## **Bosque Sony default**

Treat the Sony 200-600 as a primary long wildlife lens, not a fallback.

- Body 1: FE 200-600mm for cranes, geese, distant ducks, and repeatable flight lanes.
- Body 2: FE 24-105mm for blast-off scale, mountain bands, reflections, weather, and story frames.
- Optional swap: FE 100-400mm when birds are close or you need lighter handheld acquisition.
- Optional reach: FE 400-800mm only when light is strong and subjects are distant.

## **Tanzania Sony two-body default**

This is where the 200-600 challenge matters most: it belongs clearly in the plan.

- Body 1: FE 200-600mm as the classic Sony wildlife lens for Serengeti, Ngorongoro, birds, distant cats, and fixed vehicle positions.
- Body 2: FE 70-200mm F2.8 for close mammals, cubs, portraits, low light, camp life, and environmental compression.
- Carry 24-105mm for landscapes and vehicle/camp context; mount it when the day is not wildlife-first.
- Do not carry both 200-600 and 400-800 unless distant birds are a top priority and baggage weight allows it.

## **Canon equivalent**

Canon keeps the RF 100-500 as the flexible primary and RF 200-800 as the reach specialist.

- Bosque: RF 100-500 for flight and general wildlife, RF 200-800 for distant birds in good light, RF 24-105 for scale.
- Tanzania: RF 100-500 plus RF 70-200 F2.8 covers more vehicle situations than RF 200-800 alone.
- RF 200-800 is excellent for birds and distant cats, but it is not the first lens for close elephants, lions near the vehicle, or dusk action.

### **Bring 77 mm basics**

77 mm covers the Sony 24-105, 70-200, 100-400 and Canon RF 24-105, RF 70-200 compact, RF 100-500. This is the most useful shared filter size.

### **Bring 82 mm if using fast standard/Canon Z glass**

82 mm covers Sony 24-70 GM II, Canon RF 24-70, and Canon RF 70-200 Z. Useful for travel/landscape CPL work, not for dawn birds.

### **Skip buying giant CPLs for birds**

95 mm and 105 mm filters fit the 200-600 / RF 200-800 and Sony 400-800. They are expensive and cost light. Use lens hoods, rain sleeves, blower, and microfiber instead.

### **Use polarizers selectively**

A circular polarizer can help water/reflection/sky scenes after sunrise. Remove it for flight, predawn, and any moment when shutter speed is the priority.

BEGINNING TO  
END

# Practice

This section now works like a pre-flight curriculum: camera setup, modes, shutter speeds, physical handling, support, exposure, behavior, cold workflow, and homework.

## READING STACK

[Secrets To Stunning Bird-In-Flight Photography](#)

[Mastering Bird Photography](#)

[Photographing Birds at Bosque Del Apache](#)

[The Bird Photographer's Guide To Bosque del Apache](#)

1

## Camera Setup Baseline

Build three ready-to-use camera states before the trip: flight, perched/static, and silhouette/sky.

- Flight: Shutter Priority or Manual with Auto ISO, 1/2000 sec starting point, f/5.6-f/8, continuous AF, tracking/wide zone, high-speed burst.
- Perched/static: Aperture Priority, f/5.6-f/8 for enough depth, Auto ISO cap around 3200-6400, minimum shutter 1/500-1/1000 depending focal length.
- Silhouette: Manual exposure or exposure lock from mid-toned sky, preserve sky color, let birds go dark, review histogram instead of the rear-screen preview.
- Create a custom button or quick menu path for AF area, subject detection, exposure comp, and drive mode.

**Homework:** Save or write down the exact camera menu settings for both bodies. Do one no-thinking reset from travel mode to flight mode in under 30 seconds.

## 2

### Aperture Priority, Shutter Priority, and Manual

Know which mode to use when light and subject behavior change quickly.

- Use Aperture Priority for static birds, landscapes, habitat, and calm subjects where depth of field matters more than exact shutter speed.
- Use Shutter Priority for practice days and fast action when the main job is protecting motion speed; watch that the camera does not hit the lens' widest aperture and underexpose.
- Use Manual with Auto ISO for serious bird flight: choose shutter and aperture, let ISO float, and use exposure compensation when the system allows it.
- Use full Manual for silhouettes, moon/sky alignments, or stable light where you do not want the meter to change as birds cross different backgrounds.

**Homework:** Photograph the same moving subject in all three modes and label which mode failed first and why.

## 3

### Shutter Speed Ladder

Know the difference between frozen action, controlled wing blur, and artistic pan blur before the refuge.

- Freeze geese and fast wingbeats at 1/2500-1/3200 when light allows.
- Use 1/1600-1/2500 for cranes and slower bird flight.
- Try 1/800-1/1250 when a little wing blur is acceptable but the head still needs to stay sharp.
- Practice 1/250, 1/125, and 1/60 only after safe frames are captured.

**Homework:** Make a contact sheet with five shutter speeds. Circle the slowest speed where the head is acceptably sharp.

## 4

## Handholding and Body Mechanics

Acquire birds without fighting the lens.

- Stand with feet set before raising the lens. Rotate from hips, not wrists.
- Start wider if using a zoom, acquire the subject, then zoom in only after focus is stable.
- Keep elbows relaxed and the left hand under the lens foot or zoom ring.
- Fire short bursts of 3-6 frames instead of holding the shutter through the entire pass.

**Homework:** Track 20 moving subjects for three seconds each without firing. Then repeat with short bursts and check framing drift.

## 5

## Tripod, Gimbal, Monopod, and Beanbag

Choose the support that matches the field position instead of carrying support as decoration.

- Beanbag: first choice from the vehicle loop; quiet, fast, and stable.
- Gimbal/tripod: best for long waits at pools with 200-600, 400-800, or RF 200-800.
- Monopod: best when decks are crowded or when tripod legs would be too intrusive.
- Handheld: best for close fly-bys, quick pivots, and when the subject changes distance quickly.

**Homework:** Shoot ten-frame tests handheld, beanbag, monopod, and tripod. Record the slowest shutter speed you trust for each setup.

## 6

## White Birds and Exposure

Stop blowing snow-geese detail without making the whole scene look dead.

- Use zebras/highlight alert if available.
- Watch the RGB histogram, especially when white birds cross dark vegetation.
- Start at -0.3 to -0.7 exposure compensation for white birds in direct light if highlights clip.
- Shoot RAW and review a few files at 100 percent before assuming the exposure is safe.

**Homework:** Photograph a bright white subject against dark, medium, and bright backgrounds. Keep highlight texture in all three.

## 7

## Behavior Prediction

Start tracking before the decisive moment.

- For cranes, watch for neck stretch, crouch, wing tension, and running steps.
- For geese and ducks, watch for head bobbing, sudden alert posture, flock agitation, and synchronized movement.
- Note wind direction because takeoffs and landings usually happen into wind.
- When behavior repeats, pre-focus on the lane and wait instead of chasing every bird.

**Homework:** Spend 30 minutes watching local birds without a camera. Say the launch cue out loud before the bird moves.

8

## Cold and Dust Workflow

Be ready within two minutes of parking in predawn cold.

- Pack batteries in an inner pocket and rotate cold batteries back to warmth.
- Mount lenses before leaving the hotel to avoid dust and cold lens changes.
- Use thin liner gloves plus warmer over-gloves that can be removed quickly.
- Keep blower, microfiber, rain sleeve, and dry bag accessible, not buried.

**Homework:** Run a timed driveway simulation: park, put on gloves, shoulder bag, mount support, and make a correct test frame in two minutes.

9

## Pre-trip Readiness Checklist

Arrive with the muscle memory already built.

- Complete three local bird sessions: one flight, one exposure, one panning/blur.
- Build two custom camera presets or a written reset checklist.
- Practice backing up cards to the exact travel drive/iPad/laptop workflow.
- Pack the field bag once, then remove anything that does not earn its space.

**Homework:** Before departure, produce 20 acceptable bird-in-flight frames, 10 intentional blur frames, and one written pack list.

# Inspiration

Use public-domain images directly only when the source license supports it. Everything else is inspiration-only and linked out.

## **Snow geese in wetland scale**

Mass white-flock texture and refuge context.

Gary Stolz / USFWS, Public Domain

Can be used with credit.

[Source](#)

## **Sandhill crane pair**

Quiet water-level crane portrait and vertical crop potential.

Ryan Hagerty / USFWS, Public Domain

Can be used with credit.

Source



## Fly-out over photographers

Field experience image with sky filled by geese.

Lynne Braden / USFWS volunteer, Public Domain

Can be used with credit.

[Source](#)

MORE PLACES TO LOOK

## External Inspiration

These are linked for study, not reused as site assets.

### **Cornell / Marie Read Bosque article**

Inspiration-only photos and excellent field examples. Do not reuse images without permission.

[Open reference](#)

### **USFWS Bosque media library**

Best place to look for public-domain or agency-credit refuge images.

[Open reference](#)

### **eBird Bosque del Apache illustrated checklist**

Use for subject inspiration and seasonal expectations; image licensing varies by contributor.

[Open reference](#)

### **Flickr search: Bosque del Apache cranes**

Inspiration only unless a specific image has a compatible Creative Commons license.

[Open reference](#)

### **500px search: Bosque del Apache**

Good for composition study. Treat as inspiration-only.

[Open reference](#)

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ARTICLES, EXIF, AND FIELD GUIDANCE

# Media

The research library is organized as a field decision tool: the recommendation first, then source guidance, EXIF evidence, practical implications, and citations.

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## PRIMARY TAKEAWAY

### Carry reach, but do not let reach make every decision.

The Sony 200-600 is a primary wildlife recommendation. The 24-105 stays ready for flock scale and place. The 100-400 and 400-800 are situational choices for handling or bright-light reach.

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## 01

### Source guidance

Use Cornell, The Quite Wild, and Thom Hogan as the decision anchors: location behavior, practical settings, and restraint against pure gear obsession.

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## 02

### EXIF evidence

The evidence supports a full range from 24-105mm environmental frames to 800mm tight action, with 400-600mm-equivalent work as the recurring center.

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## 03

### Field implication

Arrive with two bodies staged: one long wildlife lens and one wide/context lens. Choose the shot first, then the focal length.

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SOURCE AND ARTICLE GUIDANCE

## What to read first

Each article keeps its three-paragraph summary, but the layout now gives stronger weight to the most actionable sources.

2026-04-19

Fieldcraft

### Sandhill Crane Migration

Evie Wilder

Cold-weather readiness, dawn patience, long-lens setup before first light.

2025-11-01

Technique

## **15 Essential Tips for Bird Photography for Beginners at Bosque del Apache**

The Quite Wild

Baseline camera settings, focus modes, panning drills, and beginner-safe field workflow.

2008-07-15

Location

## **Bosque Del Apache, New Mexico: A Bird Photographer's Playground**

Cornell All About Birds / Marie Read

Wind/light positioning, active-roost verification, behavior cues, and wide/long lens switching.

All

Fieldcraft

Technique

Location

Guide

Lens Evidence

Settings

2026-04-19

Fieldcraft

Evie Wilder

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## **Sandhill Crane Migration**

This is a recent experiential field story built around photographing sandhill cranes during severe winter conditions at Bosque del Apache. Its strongest value is emotional and operational: it makes clear how cold, wind, snow, and silence before dawn shape the actual field experience.

The article reinforces that the first task is not only camera setup but readiness. Batteries, gloves, layered clothing, lens protection, and condensation control are part of the photographic system when temperatures can drop well below freezing before sunrise.

For this trip, use the piece as a reminder to arrive fully assembled. The long lens should already be mounted, camera settings should be ready before the first call from the pond, and the cold-weather workflow should be practiced before travel.

**Use it for:** Cold-weather readiness, dawn patience, long-lens setup before first light.

2025-11-01

Technique

The Quite Wild

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## **15 Essential Tips for Bird Photography for Beginners at Bosque del Apache**

This is the most direct beginner-to-field guide in the current research set. It frames Bosque as a practical classroom because the subjects are repeated, the roads and decks create accessible positions, and the dawn/sunset rhythm gives multiple chances to improve.

The settings advice is immediately useful: fast shutter speeds for geese and cranes in flight, continuous autofocus, zone/wide AF when birds are erratic, and intentional exposure control for white birds and backlit silhouettes.

For this plan, the article becomes the baseline practice checklist. Before travel, rehearse 1/2000-1/3200 flight settings, 1/60-1/250 panning, back-button focus, and histogram review for white birds against dark and bright backgrounds.

**Use it for:** Baseline camera settings, focus modes, panning drills, and beginner-safe field workflow.

2008-07-15

Location

Cornell All About Birds / Marie Read

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## **Bosque Del Apache, New Mexico: A Bird Photographer's Playground**

Cornell provides the classic Bosque-specific photography primer: Main Pool/Flight Deck for snow-goose blast-offs, Old Highway 1 crane pools for roosting and returns, and the auto tour loops for farm-field feeding behavior.

The article is especially strong on behavior and positioning. It explains that cranes and geese follow daily routines, take off and land into wind, and show visible pre-flight cues before action. It also warns that Main Pool conditions can change, so staff/current-condition checks matter.

For this trip, Cornell's guidance argues for flexible daily planning. Use the first day to learn which pool is active, then return to the strongest roost instead of rigidly following a map. Keep wide and long lenses ready because Bosque rewards both tight action and environmental flock images.

**Use it for:** Wind/light positioning, active-roost verification, behavior cues, and wide/long lens switching.

2019-11-03

Guide

Chasing Hippoz / Vito L. Tanzi

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## **My Photography & Travel Guide to Bosque Del Apache, NM**

This travel guide is useful because it joins field locations with practical trip logistics: when to go, where to stay, how to think about light, and how to move through the refuge without overcomplicating the day.

The location framing overlaps with the core plan: Flight Deck for iconic sunrise action, North/South Loops for fields and landscapes, and Visitor Center/garden areas for smaller subjects. It also reinforces that backgrounds and light often matter as much as focal length.

For this itinerary, use the guide as a reminder to build a complete set rather than only bird portraits. The shot list should include cranes, geese, roost pools, flight lines, desert/mountain context, road-based wildlife, and the human rhythm of the refuge.

**Use it for:** Travel logistics, location scan, complete shot list, and background-first composition.

2024 updated

Lens Evidence

Outdoor Photographer

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## **Extreme Close-Up**

This article is useful less as a Bosque itinerary and more as evidence for what extreme reach can do when the goal is tight wildlife action. Its Bosque example uses very long effective focal length for snow geese.

The lesson is that reach creates a specific image type: compressed, isolated, action-heavy, and often support-dependent. It is not a replacement for wide flock scenes or medium telephoto context.

For gear planning, this supports carrying a true long option, especially the Sony 200-600, Sony 400-800, Canon RF 100-500, or Canon RF 200-800. It does not argue for using the longest setup at sunrise if the light is too low or the action is too close.

**Use it for:** Long-reach justification, support discipline, and avoiding over-tight framing at blast-off.

2024 updated

Technique

WildernessShots

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## How to Shoot Wildlife Photography

This broader wildlife tutorial is useful because it translates Bosque lessons into repeatable fieldcraft: shutter speed choices, focus control, panning, support, subject behavior, and light direction.

Its practical theme is that sharp wildlife work comes from prediction and stability, not just buying reach. Teleconverters and extreme focal lengths help only after autofocus, support, and exposure are under control.

For this plan, the takeaway is to rehearse the whole chain before travel: acquire, track, pan, burst, review, and adjust. Do not wait until the crane pool to learn how the camera behaves in continuous autofocus.

**Use it for:** End-to-end wildlife workflow practice and support-vs-handheld decision making.

2022-12

Guide

NANPA

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## **Bosque del Apache Regional Event**

The NANPA event page is useful because it describes Bosque through the lens of a working photo event: car-based shooting, winter weather, likely locations, and the expected need for long lenses and support.

It reinforces that much of the refuge work is from vehicles, pullouts, decks, and short walks. That makes beanbags, monopods, gimbals, and fast lens/body readiness more useful than a heavy hiking setup.

For this itinerary, the page supports the operational bias: use the vehicle as a blind, keep a long lens mounted, and bring support for the heaviest combinations without assuming every stop can handle tripod legs.

**Use it for:** Vehicle-based field workflow, support planning, and winter packing.

2021

Settings

BirdWatching / Rick Sammon

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## **The best camera settings for bird photography**

This settings article is useful because it ties bird photography to repeatable choices: shutter speed, autofocus mode, exposure, frame rate, and the decision to include environment rather than only tight subjects.

The Bosque connection is important because it includes a wide sunrise image, which supports carrying a standard zoom. Some of the best Bosque images are not long-lens portraits; they are sky, water, mountains, and bird scale.

For the trip, use it to avoid a common mistake: standing at a blast-off with only a super-telephoto view. Keep 24-105 ready and know when the strongest image is a flock in place, not a single bird filling the frame.

**Use it for:** Settings discipline and wide environmental bird photography.

2019-07-02

Location

Outdoor Photographer / OEL

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## **Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge**

This concise location feature emphasizes Bosque's winter subjects, weather, mist, light, and variety. It is valuable because it keeps the plan from becoming only a gear spreadsheet.

Its practical angle is experimentation: low perspective where legal, panning, slow shutters, flock shapes, and environmental composition. Those are all useful when the obvious bird action slows or weather turns gray.

For the field plan, save one mid-morning or sunset for non-obvious work. Try motion blur, silhouettes, reeds, water color, and mountain-backed flock shapes after the safe sharp frames are captured.

**Use it for:** Creative fallback plan for gray days and slower windows.

2016-12-21

Fieldcraft

LifePixel / Bob Coates

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## **Bosque del Apache Wildlife Refuge**

This field-based guide focuses on cranes, behavior, local intel, and anticipation. It is another reminder that Bosque rewards watching before reacting.

The lens evidence is useful because it shows the value of long effective reach, but the deeper point is timing: a bird telegraphs takeoff before the dramatic frame happens.

For practice, convert this into a homework task: watch birds locally and call out the launch cue before pressing the shutter. The goal is to recognize movement early enough to acquire focus calmly.

**Use it for:** Behavior prediction, long-reach use, and pre-flight cue practice.

2009-01-13

Lens Evidence

## Luminous Landscape

SUPPORTING PROOF

# EXIF evidence by focal-length role

## Bosque del Apache

Grouped by what the data proves in the field, not by source chronology.  
This older photo essay remains useful because it shows how long Bosque has rewarded medium-to-long telephoto work. The technology is dated, but the field pattern is not.

WIDE AND ENVIRONMENTAL

## 2 evidence notes

[Wikimedia Commons](#)

### Snow geese at Bosque

Canon EOS 60D, 100mm EXIF

Wide and short-telephoto frames are part of the core Bosque story, especially for flock scale and refuge atmosphere.

[BirdWatching / Rick Sammon](#)

### Bosque sunrise

Canon EOS 5D Mark III with 24-105mm

The 24-105mm is not a backup lens; it is a primary tool for sky, water, mountains, light, and bird scale.

prediction, discipline, position, and knowing the intended image matter more than maximum

MID-TELEPHOTO CONTEXT

## 1 evidence note

[Wikimedia Commons](#)

### Bosque light / landscape

Nikon D7000 with 55-300mm, 135mm EXIF; about 202mm full-frame equivalent

Mid-telephoto compression works for layered light, water, mountains, habitat, and birds as small elements in place.

## 2 evidence notes

**Wikimedia Commons**

### **Sandhill crane**

Canon EOS 60D, 350mm EXIF

Good position can make crane images viable below 500mm, especially when birds are near pools or crossing predictable lanes.

**Luminous Landscape**

### **Migratory bird photography**

Canon D30 with Canon 400mm f/4 DO IS, 640mm effective field of view

Classic Bosque bird work often sits around the 400-600mm-equivalent range, supporting the Sony 200-600 and Canon 100-500 plans.

## 2 evidence notes

**LifePixel / Bob Coates**

### **Crane flight and reflections**

Panasonic Lumix GX85 with 100-400mm; source notes an 800mm full-frame-equivalent setup

Long reach helps when light and handling are under control, but behavior reading and support are still decisive.

**Outdoor Photographer / George Lepp**

### **Snow goose in flight**

Canon EOS-1D X, EF 400mm f/2.8L II, EF 2x III, 800mm

Extreme reach can produce tight action images, but it is specialized and support-dependent rather than the everyday default.

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PRACTICAL FIELD IMPLICATIONS

# How this changes the plan

These are the operational decisions the research supports.

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## **Decide the photograph before the lens.**

The evidence supports everything from 24-105mm environmental frames to 800mm tight action. Lens choice should follow the intended image, not a reflexive reach-maximizing habit.

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## **Sony 200-600 is the credible long default.**

For Bosque and especially Tanzania, the 200-600 is a primary wildlife tool. The 100-400 is the lighter close-pass option; the 400-800 is the bright-light reach specialist.

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## **Wide frames need equal readiness.**

Blast-offs, mountain bands, water color, and sky scale happen quickly. Keep 24-105 mounted on the second body instead of treating it as a bag lens.

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## **Reach only works after technique.**

Long lenses and teleconverters help when autofocus, support, shutter speed, exposure, and behavior prediction are already under control.

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LINKS AND CITATIONS

# Source index

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## **Fieldcraft**

### **Sandhill Crane Migration**

Evie Wilder

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## **Technique**

## 15 Essential Tips for Bird Photography for Beginners at Bosque del Apache

The Quite Wild

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### Location

#### Bosque Del Apache, New Mexico: A Bird Photographer's Playground

Cornell All About Birds / Marie Read

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### Guide

#### My Photography & Travel Guide to Bosque Del Apache, NM

Chasing Hippoz / Vito L. Tanzi

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### Lens Evidence

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Luminous Landscape

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### Fieldcraft

# Bosque del Apache

Thom Hogan

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CHECKED 2026-06-03

# Sources

Current access, lodging, pricing, specs, road, and bird-location notes should be rechecked after final booking and again in the week before travel.

Official refuge

## **USFWS Bosque del Apache Visit Us**

2026-06-03

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/bosque-del-apache/visit-us>

Official refuge

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Official refuge

## **USFWS Rules and Policies**

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Official refuge

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Field guide

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Field guide

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<https://eviewilder.com/blog/sandhill-crane-migration-bosque-del-apache-winter/>

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Gear specs

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### **Digital Camera World - Best lenses for safari photography in 2026**

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Lodging photos

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2026-06-03

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Lodging photos

**Comfort Inn & Suites Socorro**

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Lodging photos

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**Fairfield by Marriott Inn & Suites Los Lunas Photos**

2026-06-03

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