



Field Guides Tour Report

Colorado Grouse I 2015

Apr 1, 2015 to Apr 11, 2015
Chris Benesh & Tom Johnson

For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).



The display of the male Greater Sage-Grouse is one of the most uniquely North American sights on this tour, a tour full of... uniquely North American sights! Photo by guide Tom Johnson.

We lucked into some awesome weather this week. An abundance of great bird and wildlife sightings followed suit. Everyone seemed quite pleased with how the tour developed, with magnificent views of the target species of grouse as well as amazing encounters with many other regional specialties, not to mention some pretty special scenery.

After meeting at the Denver airport, we scouted around the nearby grasslands, finding Burrowing Owls quite easily. We then headed south to Pueblo, making a detour to find Mountain Plovers and Scaled Quail. After a Mexican feast in Pueblo, we called it a night.

Morning birding east of Pueblo was quite thrasher-y. We first found Curve-billed Thrashers, and then followed those up with a flock of six calling Sage Thrashers! Heading east along the windy and dusty Arkansas River corridor, we sampled several lakes along the way, eventually stumbling onto a huge flock of white geese that turned out to be mostly Ross's Geese, quite late for this area. An early dinner in Lamar put us in good position for our first grouse lek.

After an overnight windstorm abated, we awoke in the dark and piled into a school bus for the ride across the eastern plains to a Lesser Prairie-Chicken lek. As the dawn grew brighter, we found ourselves staring at several male prairie-chickens displaying away on a patch of prairie at the edge of some agricultural fields. A marvelous first chicken encounter! Heading north along the eastern edge of Colorado, we stopped in barren farm fields, finding Ferruginous Hawk, more Mountain Plovers, and, wait, what's that - a Horned Lark badgering a Prairie Rattlesnake! Not a bad sighting for this early in the spring - the warm weather was encouraging lots of spring-like activity. Continuing to Wray, we were welcomed to the Bledsoe Ranch by Bob Bledsoe himself, then had an excellent dinner at a steakhouse in town.

As a lunar eclipse melted away into daylight, we enjoyed the extraordinary sights and sounds of a Greater Prairie-Chicken lek at the Bledsoe Ranch. Moving west, we lucked out with close views of a male McCown's Longspur at Pawnee National Grassland. Later in the day, we discovered a beautiful male hybrid Blue-winged x Cinnamon Teal at Lower Latham Reservoir near Evans, and got to compare it to Cinnamon, Blue-winged, and Green-winged Teal (just to be sure!).

After a good night of sleep, a morning drive took us up into the front range of the Rocky Mountains, and the air cooled down substantially. Arriving up high at Loveland Pass after breakfast, it didn't take long at all for a White-tailed Ptarmigan to appear on the slope below us. This male discovered another pair of all-white superchickens, and we got to enjoy a bit of sparring and calling at close range. Retreating to lower elevation, we soaked up a flock of all three species (four taxa, including Hepburn's Gray-crowned) of American rosy-finches at feeders in Silverthorne. Then, we continued on through the mountains to Gunnison, where we put down our bags for a few nights (a rare luxury on this mobile tour).

We were out early the next morning to settle in to the state-run Gunnison Sage-Grouse blind at Wuanita Hot Springs; though the grouse were fairly far away from the blind, we had good scope views, and also enjoyed warming up with the rising sun here. Later in the morning, we found Gray Jay, Clark's Nutcracker, and four different American Three-toed Woodpeckers at Monarch Pass. In the afternoon, we took a leisurely expedition up to Crested Butte, finding American Dippers en route and enjoying the scenery of this beautiful part of Colorado (though we opted out of skiing).

The next morning didn't involve a pre-dawn arrival at a chicken lek, but we did head to the Black Canyon of the Gunnison in order to look for Dusky Grouse. Though we had to make a few laps through the park roads, we eventually found three grouse, including a female that perched in a tree top

offering wonderful views. The stunning vistas of Black Canyon were also quite memorable. A windy afternoon mostly consisted of relocating to Grand Junction; however, we did stop to see some gorgeous Lewis's Woodpeckers, and also spotted a Golden Eagle hunting prairie-dogs below eye level at close range. Wow!

Our morning start out of Grand Junction took us to a dry canyon near Cameo, where we enjoyed Chukar scrambling around on the rocky slopes. A quiet loop through the spectacular Colorado National Monument turned up Pinyon Jay, Juniper Titmouse, and some great flyby views of White-throated Swifts. We then had the beautiful experience of driving through snow squalls on the way to Craig in the northwestern part of Colorado, through some of the most remote country covered on this tour.

An early wake-up in Craig allowed us to make it to Hayden in the dark to see Sharp-tailed Grouse dancing in the snow as the morning dawned. Though activity was subdued at first, we eventually got to see and hear a good dancing show along the side of a public road. We headed east to Walden and dropped off our bags at our hotel before continuing on for some afternoon birding. This took us to the Moose Visitor Center at the eastern edge of North Park, where we found a few Moose, two Pine Grosbeaks, and another flock of rosy-finches (close views of another Black Rosy-Finch!). An optional evening outing to Rabbit Ears Pass resulted in us hearing a singing Boreal Owl, certainly not a typical find on this tour! We couldn't see the bird because it was on the far side of a snow-covered roadside lake, but hearing its snipe-like song on a cold, still evening was very special indeed.

Our last grouse lek of the tour was perhaps the most spectacular. We met dawn on a dirt road near Coalmont, and found ourselves in the company of many dozens of huge Greater Sage-Grouse, strutting and popping away in a clearing in the roadside sage. The hours we spent in amongst those birds (at times, we were totally surrounded as grouse walked past on the road) were some of the most memorable of the whole tour. Happy with this experience, we floated back to Denver, stopping to see Barrow's Goldeneye at Windy Gap Reservoir and Williamson's Sapsuckers at Genesee Park.

With wonderful views of our target species, great company, and a lack of weather curveballs, this was definitely one of the most fun and successful tours that Chris and I have run this spring. Thanks to all for coming along - we hope to see you again at some point down the road.

Good birding!

Tom Johnson

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: * = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

SNOW GOOSE (*Chen caerulescens caerulescens*) – These made up a surprisingly small percentage of the white geese on the Rt. 50 reservoir west of Lamar - Ross's Geese dominated there. We also saw a Snow Goose at Fruit Growers Reservoir.

ROSS'S GOOSE (*Chen rossii*) – We saw a startlingly large flock of ~1300 in a reservoir along Rt. 50 west of Lamar, with only a few Snow Geese mixed in.

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) – Common and widespread; seen on every day of the tour.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*) – Widespread; found on most days.

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Anas americana*) – Widespread; we saw these both in the plains and up in the mountains.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Common; seen almost every day.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*) – A common migrant duck; we also saw one male hybrid Blue-winged x Cinnamon Teal at Lower Latham Reservoir near Evans.

CINNAMON TEAL (*Anas cyanoptera*) – Widespread; 30 at Lower Latham were in wonderful light.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*) – Widespread.

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – Uncommon on this tour; at three locations mixed with other dabblers.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN) (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – Common and widespread.

CANVASBACK (*Aythya valisineria*) – A small group was at Walden Reservoir on our last morning.

REDHEAD (*Aythya americana*) – We saw these at several reservoirs, including in comparison with Canvasbacks at Walden Reservoir.

RING-NECKED DUCK (*Aythya collaris*) – We saw these widely in the western part of the state.

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*) – Common and widespread.

LONG-TAILED DUCK (*Clangula hyemalis*) – One scruffy male was a rare find at Crystal Lake in Lake County.

BUFFLEHEAD (*Bucephala albeola*) – We saw scattered individuals at several locations throughout the state.

COMMON GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala clangula*) – Common, especially in mountain reservoirs. 95 were at Blue Mesa Reservoir, and 30 were at Windy Gap Reservoir.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala islandica*) – We had leisurely studies of at least a dozen individuals at Windy Gap Reservoir on the last day of the tour.

COMMON MERGANSER (*Mergus merganser*) – These large divers were scattered widely on mountain reservoirs; our high count was 30 on Blue Mesa Reservoir.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – Over 200 were at Lake Henry during our first full day; we also found these divers at Lake Meredith and Walden Reservoir.

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

SCALED QUAIL (*Callipepla squamata*) – We found a number of these delightful quail on our first two days; the first encounter was along our drive to Pueblo from Denver, and we found more east of Pueblo the next day.

GAMBEL'S QUAIL (*Callipepla gambelii*) – These quail were quite common in neighborhoods between Grand Junction and the Colorado National

Monument.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

CHUKAR (*Alectoris chukar*) – We connected with several individuals calling along the rocky slopes of Coal Canyon, Cameo. [I]

RING-NECKED PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*) – Common in the plains of northeastern Colorado, including in the immediate area of Wray. [II]

GREATER SAGE-GROUSE (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) – This was the final lek and the crown jewel of the suite of grouse that we found on the tour. We visited a lek southwest of Walden and had amazingly close roadside views of dozens of males and females with a gorgeous montane landscape in the background.

GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE (*Centrocercus minimus*) – Though the birds were quite distant this spring, we were able to view displaying males well through the scope from the state blind east of Gunnison. At one point, a female flew past the blind, leading a small group of attending males.

WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN (*Lagopus leucura altipetens*) – Three individuals made our visit to Loveland Pass a resounding success. We initially saw one male - after flying in and landing, he took a bit of a stroll along the slope below us, discovering a camouflaged male/ female pair. The males then proceeded to fight at length, and we had some amazing views. The males were still in fully white winter plumage. This sighting merited "Bird of the trip" status for White-tailed Ptarmigan!

DUSKY GROUSE (*Dendragapus obscurus obscurus*) – After a quiet start to our morning at Black Canyon of the Gunnison, we found a female Dusky Grouse walking around in the campground loop - she posed for us for a while atop a small tree. Afterward, another pair was walking through thick roadside vegetation, and we had brief views of them.

SHARP-TAILED GROUSE (*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*) – A lek along a public road south of Hayden gave us close views of dancing grouse on a cold, snowy morning. We could even hear the males' wings rattling during their displays.

GREATER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN (PINNATUS) (*Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus*) – Our experience at Bledsoe Cattle Company near Wray was nothing short of amazing. After we watched a lunar eclipse in the pre-dawn, dozens of male Greater Prairie-Chickens arrived and boomed and danced alongside our vehicle blinds while Burrowing Owls peered curiously from their holes. Magic!

LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) – This was our first chicken lek of the tour, and we arrived in style in a school bus! Several displaying male prairie-chickens strutted their stuff at moderate distance before packing it in for the morning.

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – We saw these massive birds at several stops during our plains loop. The spread-tail, displaying males in the woods at Bonny Reservoir were especially memorable.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

HORNED GREBE (*Podiceps auritus*) – Uncommon; we found about five at Lake Meredith early in the tour; another was at Walden Reservoir on our last day.

EARED GREBE (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – One was with Horned Grebes at Lake Meredith.

WESTERN GREBE (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) – Common at large reservoirs, especially in the plains.

CLARK'S GREBE (*Aechmophorus clarkii*) – Fifty of these large grebes were on Lake Henry on our first full day.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Fairly common; seen at widespread reservoirs throughout the state.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) – Four of these behemoths were at Lake Meredith on our first day; more flew over at very close range at Walden Reservoir on our final day.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – We saw several times during our drives; additionally, there were several dozen at a rookery at Lake Henry.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Fairly common; we kept scrutinizing these in search of eagles.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

GOLDEN EAGLE (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – Remarkable views! The best looks included one hunting prairie-dogs at Fruit Growers Reservoir; we also scoped a nest on a utility tower near Craig.

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) – We saw singles and pairs at many locations in open habitats. Most interesting was a male that was apparently hunting for two nesting females in the marsh at the south end of Lower Latham Reservoir.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – One flew over near our lunch stop in the Pawnee National Grasslands.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*) – Three flew over the Black Canyon of the Gunnison as we admired the amazing scenery.

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Several cruised over during reservoir stops in the mountains during the last few days of the tour.

SWAINSON'S HAWK (*Buteo swainsoni*) – Common; seen on most days.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Common; seen every day. A dark morph at Bonny Reservoir was likely a "Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk.

FERRUGINOUS HAWK (*Buteo regalis*) – One was perched roadside as we drove to breakfast after viewing the lekking Lesser Prairie-Chickens. They were seen briefly in flight and at distance later in the same day, though we never had a killer look at this species.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK (*Buteo lagopus*) – We saw excellent numbers - surprising were the repeated, excellent views of adult males. Hotspots were the eastern plains east of Pawnee National Grasslands, and the higher elevation grasslands south of Walden. It was hard to resist stopping for each one, so we didn't resist! Many roadside stops involved good views of Roughies on this tour.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*) – We found small numbers in marshy reservoirs.

Gruidae (Cranes)

SANDHILL CRANE (*Grus canadensis*) – Quite a few pairs were along the roadsides between Craig and Hayden.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

AMERICAN AVOCET (*Recurvirostra americana*) – Two were at Walden Reservoir on our last day.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Common; widespread.

MOUNTAIN PLOVER (*Charadrius montanus*) – We were lucky to find these rare shorebirds at multiple locations. Our first were northeast of Pueblo along Squirrel Creek Rd.; we found more in the plowed, bare dirt fields near our Prairie Rattlesnake sighting.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Aside from Killdeer, this was the most widespread shorebird seen on the tour.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – Four were at Verhoeff Reservoir in the plains.

LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*) – Three were at Verhoeff Reservoir.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – We found one at Verhoeff Reservoir.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BONAPARTE'S GULL (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – Eight were at Lake Henry; another provided close flyby views at Walden Reservoir.

FRANKLIN'S GULL (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*) – Twenty migrants were in a tight flock on the water at Blue Mesa Reservoir.

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*) – Common and widespread on reservoirs.

CALIFORNIA GULL (*Larus californicus*) – About 150 had arrived at Walden Reservoir.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Common in towns and cities. [H]

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Very common in towns and near farms.

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – Common, but outnumbered in many locations by Eurasian Collared-Doves.

Strigidae (Owls)

GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*) – Fairly common; we spotted several nests with chicks in the eastern plains and in North Park.

BURROWING OWL (*Athene cunicularia*) – Great views in a prairie-dog colony near Denver International Airport; others were in the midst of the Greater Prairie-Chicken lek we watched at Bledsoe Cattle Company near Wray.

Apodidae (Swifts)

WHITE-THROATED SWIFT (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) – We had great views of these amazing aerialists in the rocky canyons of Colorado NM and Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

LEWIS'S WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes lewis*) – Two were in large dead cottonwoods near Fruit Growers Reservoir - we watched them as they hunkered down behind the large tree trunks in strong winds.

WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*) – At the very end of the tour, a male and a female posed nicely for us at Genesee Park - the cherries on top of a delightful trip.

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*) – Fairly common in the eastern plains.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (ROCKY MTS.) (*Picoides villosus orius*) – Surprisingly, we didn't find this bird until our last birding stop at Genesee Park.

AMERICAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER (ROCKY MTS.) (*Picoides dorsalis dorsalis*) – We found four of these handsome, boreal woodpeckers just below Monarch Pass, east of Gunnison.

NORTHERN FLICKER (*Colaptes auratus*) – We saw several intergrade flickers with a mix of yellow and red in the wings and tail in the eastern plains, including at Bonny Reservoir.

NORTHERN FLICKER (RED-SHAFTED) (*Colaptes auratus cafer*) – Most of the flickers that we saw, including all of those in the western part of the state, were of this subspecies group.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – Common; seen every day.

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – A Prairie Merlin was perched on the fence along the edge of the Greater Prairie-Chicken lek at Bledsoe's Ranch.

PRAIRIE FALCON (*Falco mexicanus*) – We had two nice flyovers on our first full day (IL Rd. and Arkansas River near Lamar); another circled past as we watched some ponds near Craig.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*) – One posed atop a tree at a pit stop east of Pueblo.

SAY'S PHOEBE (*Sayornis saya*) – Common; seen almost every day.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – Uncommon; we mostly saw these while driving.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

PLUMBEOUS VIREO (*Vireo plumbeus*) – A Solitary Vireo, presumably this species, was singing at Genesee Park on our last afternoon - an early arrival for the area. We had some crummy views of it before it disappeared.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

GRAY JAY (*Perisoreus canadensis*) – One appeared and posed at eye level at our Am. Three-toed Woodpecker stop below Monarch Pass.

PINYON JAY (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*) – After a long search, we eventually had great views of a single bird at Colorado National Monument.

STELLER'S JAY (INTERIOR) (*Cyanocitta stelleri macrolopha*) – Common in the mountains. These are the interior birds with white streaks in the forehead and white eye arcs.

BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – Common in woodlots and towns in the eastern plains.

WESTERN SCRUB-JAY (WOODHOUSE'S) (*Aphelocoma californica woodhouseii*) – These scratchy-voiced jays popped up for us at Black Canyon of the Gunnison and Colorado NM.

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE (*Pica hudsonia*) – Common; seen every day.

CLARK'S NUTCRACKER (*Nucifraga columbiana*) – We had some good views at Monarch Pass, including one bird that perched above us for over five minutes.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – Common and widespread.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Common and widespread.

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*) – Extremely common in the eastern plains and also widespread in open lands in the western part of the state.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – A swallow flock near Craig was mostly made up of this species.

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – At least two early arrivals were mixed with a large flock of Tree Swallows near Craig.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – Several were seen near Craig.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE (*Poecile atricapillus*) – We had good views in Gunnison and also the Moose Visitor Center.

MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE (*Poecile gambeli*) – Common at higher elevations in the western part of the state. We had good comparisons of these and Black-capped Chickadees at the Moose Visitor Center.

JUNIPER TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*) – We heard several; two showed briefly along the road at Colorado NM.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta carolinensis*) – Our only ones were interior Rockies birds at Genesee Park on the last afternoon of the tour.

PYGMY NUTHATCH (*Sitta pygmaea*) – Common at Genesee Park.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

ROCK WREN (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) – Three bounced around on the rocks and sang for us at Coal Canyon in Cameo.

CANYON WREN (*Catherpes mexicanus*) – We had amazing views of one that climbed up to the top of the rocks and sang at Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

BEWICK'S WREN (*Thryomanes bewickii*) – Several sang at Colorado NM, but we didn't see any this time. [*]

Cinclididae (Dippers)

AMERICAN DIPPER (*Cinclus mexicanus*) – Wonderful views at the Roaring Judy fish hatchery, where a pair was bringing material to a nest under the bridge we stood on. Awesome!

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

WESTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia mexicana*) – Several called and posed for us at Genesee Park.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia currucoides*) – Common in the western half of the state; great views near the Gunnison Sage-Grouse blind.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – Common; seen every day.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (EASTERN) (*Toxostoma curvirostre oberholseri*) – Great views along the IL Rd. east of Pueblo.

SAGE THRASHER (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) – Six were interacting in a surprising concentration along the IL Rd. east of Pueblo.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Common; seen every day. [I]

Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)

CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR (*Calcarius ornatus*) – A flock of ten flew over when we arrived for breakfast at the Dorenkamp's house after viewing Lesser Prairie-Chickens.

MCCOWN'S LONGSPUR (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*) – We had excellent views of a male that lingered in the road at Pawnee National Grasslands.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (AUDUBON'S) (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*) – Several brief views of birds from the vans in Grand Junction.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

SPOTTED TOWHEE (*Pipilo maculatus*) – We saw one well at Black Canyon of the Gunnison and heard several others in the area.

CANYON TOWHEE (*Melospiza fusca*) – Two were with Curve-billed Thrashers along the IL Rd. east of Pueblo.

BLACK-THROATED SPARROW (*Amphispiza bilineata*) – At least four were in Coal Canyon in Cameo.

FOX SPARROW (SLATE-COLORED) (*Passerella iliaca schistacea*) – We had amazing views of a close, singing bird in the campground at Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*) – We found several in various sites around Gunnison.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S) (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – We found these migrants in scattered locations throughout the tour.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (PINK-SIDED) (*Junco hyemalis mearnsi*) – One was in Crested Butte; we had better views at the feeders at the Moose Visitor Center.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (GRAY-HEADED) (*Junco hyemalis caniceps*) – This is the common subspecies of Dark-eyed Junco in the mountains of the western half of Colorado.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Common; seen every day.

WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*) – Common; seen every day.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) – One bright male flew over the Arkansas River marshes near Fort Lyon.

COMMON GRACKLE (BRONZED) (*Quiscalus quiscula versicolor*) – Common in the eastern plains.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – We saw several of these large grackles in the eastern plains.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH (HEPBURN'S) (*Leucosticte tephrocotis littoralis*) – Six of this gray-faced subspecies were mixed in with the other rosy-finch taxa at Silverthorne.

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH (GRAY-CROWNED) (*Leucosticte tephrocotis tephrocotis*) – About 25 of these interior birds were mixed with the other rosy-finches at Silverthorne.

BLACK ROSY-FINCH (*Leucosticte atrata*) – We saw one at Silverthorne; another posed handsomely at the Moose Visitor Center.

BROWN-CAPPED ROSY-FINCH (*Leucosticte australis*) – About eighty were at the feeders at Silverthorne, where they made up the bulk of the rosy-finch flock. Another 25 or so were at the Moose Visitor Center.

PINE GROSBEAK (*Pinicola enucleator montana*) – A male and female came in very close at the Moose Visitor Center feeders.

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – Common; seen on most days.

CASSIN'S FINCH (*Haemorhous cassinii*) – We had good views at several feeder setups, including in Crested Butte, Gunnison, and at the Moose Visitor Center.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH (*Spinus tristis*) – One was at Crow Valley Campground.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Common; seen every day. [I]

MAMMALS

PIKA (*Ochotona princeps*) – One vocalized and was seen briefly at Loveland Pass.

NUTTALL'S (MOUNTAIN) COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus nuttalli*) – We saw these in the western half of the state.

DESERT COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) – These were the common bunnies in the Denver area.

WHITE-TAILED JACKRABBIT (*Lepus townsendi*) – We saw these a few times near Walden at night.

LEAST CHIPMUNK (*Tamias minimus*) – The common, tiny chipmunk. We might have seen at least one other species, but never nailed down the ID.

YELLOW-BELLIED MARMOT (*Marmota flaviventris*) – One was in a meadow just outside of Craig.

WHITE-TAILED ANTELOPE SQUIRREL (*Ammospermophilus leucurus*) – A few people saw this one in Coal Canyon near Cameo.

WYOMING GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus elegans*) – Common in the western half of the state; plain brown.

THIRTEEN-LINED GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*) – One was on the eastern plains near Pawnee National Grasslands.

ROCK SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus variegatus*) – We saw these at Black Canyon of the Gunnison and Colorado NM.

GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus lateralis*) – One was at Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

BLACK-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) – Common in the eastern plains.

WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys leucurus*) – We saw a few of these in the northern part of the "mountain west".

GUNNISON PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) – We saw a few of this range-restricted beast in the Gunnison basin.

FOX SQUIRREL (*Sciurus niger*) – One was a drive-by sighting in a town near the end of the tour.

RED SQUIRREL (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) – Best views were at Silverthorne and near Moose Pass.

ORD'S KANGAROO RAT (*Dipodomys ordii*) – This is the species that we saw predawn at Bledsoe's Ranch.

MUSKRAT (*Ondatra zibethica*) – Swimming in a roadside marsh.

RED FOX (*Vulpes vulpes*) – One was a roadside sighting.

COYOTE (*Canis latrans*) – Common! We kept seeing these, almost every day in the western part of the state.

STRIPED SKUNK (*Mephitis mephitis*) – One was out in the eastern plains. Unfortunately, this was a common "DOR" sighting.

ELK (*Cervus canadensis*) – A common sight in the west; we even saw a mostly white one!

MULE DEER (*Odocoileus hemionus*) – Common, especially in the mountains.

MOOSE (*Alces alces*) – We found a few near the aptly named Moose Visitor Center. Awesome!

PRONGHORN (*Antilocapra americana*) – Common in the plains; we saw more in North Park, too.

BIGHORN SHEEP (*Ovis canadensis*) – A roadside group on I-70 offered magnificent views during our drive up to Loveland Pass.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 136 bird taxa and 26 mammal taxa