



Field Guides Tour Report

Colorado Grouse I 2017

Apr 1, 2017 to Apr 11, 2017
Chris Benesh & Dave Stejskal

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



It was another great "chicken" tour, this one our first of two 2017 departures. We thought we'd begin with something a little different...a Greater Prairie-Chicken in flight, captured beautifully by participant Herb Fechter.

April weather in Colorado is always a bit of a gamble every year, and we drew a couple of less-than-stellar hands on this trip with occasional rain, fog, snow, and icy roads interspersed with long bouts of excellent weather and road conditions across this gorgeous state. Regardless of the weather, what a wonderful trip we had together after all 2400 miles were driven!

This was my second Colorado Grouse tour, and I loved just about every minute of it -- except for that drive over Rabbit Ears Pass and our first drive over Loveland Pass. We had some fantastic moments together chasing the fine variety of 'chickens' that Colorado -- and Kansas -- host within their borders, and we scored well on most of them.

This was the first year on this tour that we've actually overnighted in Kansas in order to see the declining Lesser Prairie-Chicken. Listed as Vulnerable by BirdLife International, the populations of this smaller, paler cousin of the Greater Prairie-Chicken are losing ground to agriculture and development within the species' restricted range. So much so, that the population that we saw so reliably near Lamar, Colorado, earlier in the history of this tour is no longer dependable, forcing us to move to where the birds are in nearby southwestern Kansas. Despite some muddy roads and persistent ground fog early on, we ended up with good looks in the scopes from the road at this difficult species before we moved on to northeastern Colorado.

Our next 'chicken' encounter was quite a bit more intimate than the first, with thirty or so male Greater Prairie-Chickens -- also listed as Vulnerable by BirdLife International -- strutting their stuff for the few females that we saw venture into the lek during our visit. We enjoyed all this from the confines of our vehicles, since the prairie-chickens were mere meters away from us! This early morning visit certainly ranked as one of the major highlights of the tour for everyone.

Next, after an unsuccessful bid to find White-tailed Ptarmigan at Loveland Pass, we crossed the Rocky Mountains west of Denver to the mountain town of Gunnison, stopping on the way for our first Brown-capped Rosy-Finches and others in the town of Silverthorne. After enduring the pre-dawn cold and darkness in the viewing blind on our first morning in Gunnison, the lightening sky eventually revealed the presence of some twenty-five or more

Gunnison Sage-Grouse on the hills and flats visible from our position. While the experience with the sage-grouse wasn't exactly what I'd term 'intimate' (they were a long way away), our views were quite good in the scopes, and it was overall a fine experience with this rare and local species.

Next on our list of 'things to do' was an early morning visit to Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park to the west. Chris and I wanted to maximize our chance of finding a Dusky Grouse for the group, so we planned to get to the park earlier than we had on past tours. Did that strategy ever pay off! No sooner had we entered the campground loop when we found our first adult male, displaying on the shoulder of the road. And a walk around the campground yielded a few more of these solitary birds, all allowing very close approach -- too close for those with long camera lenses!

Our next big target on the chicken list, Sharp-tailed Grouse, proved to be pretty frustrating for us due to the spring snowstorm that hit the Craig area overnight. We ended up with some distant scope looks at a couple of birds at a traditional lek nearby, but it wasn't much of a show, I'm afraid. Spring weather in Colorado sometimes doesn't cooperate the way you'd like it to! Our next venue, however, had a much different outcome. From the little town of Walden, we ventured into the pre-dawn darkness to a spectacular lek of Greater Sage-Grouse, with 100+ birds displaying and standing around right next to the road and our vans! You might say that we saved the best for last on this tour. It was an experience that none of us will soon forget.

Chris and I want to thank all of you wonderful travel companions for taking this tour with us. Having a good-natured group along really makes our job so much easier and enjoyable! We hope that we have many opportunities to travel with all of you again throughout our diverse world. Good birding until then!

--Dave

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)

ROSS'S GOOSE (*Chen rossii*) – We saw three of these at some distance in the scopes at Cheraw Lake before we drove into Kansas. The other distant white geese that we saw from the highway were probably a mix of this one and the very similar Snow Goose.

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*)

WOOD DUCK (*Aix sponsa*) – A couple of birds at a grassy puddle outside of Garden City, KS were our only ones of the tour.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*)

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Anas americana*)

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*) – Good numbers of these and the next species throughout the tour.

CINNAMON TEAL (*Anas cyanoptera*)

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*)

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – Recorded on only one day, oddly enough!

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN) (*Anas crecca carolinensis*)

CANVASBACK (*Aythya valisineria*) – Unmistakable - even at a great distance.

REDHEAD (*Aythya americana*)

RING-NECKED DUCK (*Aythya collaris*)

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*)

BUFFLEHEAD (*Bucephala albeola*) – One of the cutest of our N. American ducks.

COMMON GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala clangula*) – We had some good numbers of this one at the extreme upstream end of Blue Mesa Reservoir near Gunnison.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala islandica*) – Windy Gap Reservoir on our final day was again the most reliable spot for this one.

HOODED MERGANSER (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) – We stopped at a little roadside pond that in the southwest that sported an impressive number and variety of waterfowl, including at least twelve of these beauties!

COMMON MERGANSER (*Mergus merganser*)

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – A single female was spotted hanging out with the numerous Common Mergansers at the upper end of Blue Mesa Reservoir.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

SCALED QUAIL (*Callipepla squamata*) – Our first 'chicken'!! We saw several of these well in the desert scrub next to the road east of Pueblo on our first full day of the tour.

GAMBEL'S QUAIL (*Callipepla gambelii*) – We heard these at first in that housing development near Grand Junction and had to do some repositioning of the group before we found the mother load! This is the northern extreme of this charismatic species' range.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

CHUKAR (*Alectoris chukar*) – We had several birds reasonably close - close enough to spot them on the hillsides above us - but we never could lay eyes on one. Drat!! [I*]

RING-NECKED PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*) – A common sight on the eastern plains during this tour. [I]

GREATER SAGE-GROUSE (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) – This was our last chicken of the tour - and what a show it was! Our first lek proved to be a little too far off of the road to really enjoy, but Chris knew of an alternate lek, and led us to that one in short order. Once there - and sharing the whole experience with three other vehicles - we thrilled at the sight of over one-hundred individual Greater Sage-Grouse in two distinct groups, some

of the birds mere meters from our silent, parked vans. The number of females present at this lek was itself impressive, but those displaying males are forever burned upon my memory!

GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE (*Centrocercus minimus*) – A recently-described 'crypto-species', our experience with this very local and Endangered grouse was quite good, despite the distance involved. Described to science only in 2000, this was the first new species described in North America (the U.S. & Canada) since the late 19th century! Careful searching by our group yielded at least 25 birds - most of them on the ridge overlooking the valley. Once the sun came up, it was actually quite easy to spot the displaying males with the sun shining through their spread pale tails. Lucky for us, we had plenty of excellent scopes to go around, and all of us came away with good views. I sure do wish they were closer, though!

DUSKY GROUSE (*Dendragapus obscurus obscurus*) – An early arrival at Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP was the right strategy this year! Upon our arrival at the campground loop there, we had our bird - an adult male in full display - in the bag! A walk around the roads of the campground yielded more birds displaying and chasing each other, making for a very memorable encounter with this confiding grouse (a rather recent split from the similar Sooty Grouse of the West Coast).

SHARP-TAILED GROUSE (*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*) – The bad weather conspired against us on this one, and we never got more than distant scope views of a couple of birds running for cover just as the snow started in earnest.

GREATER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN (PINNATUS) (*Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus*) – Clearly, one of the supreme highlights of this short tour was our experience with this species on the Bledsoe property near Wray in the n.e. corner of the state. Shortly after we had everyone in place in the four (!) available vehicles, the Prairie-Chicken show began. And what a show! Nearly thirty displaying males wowed our group - more than they seemed to impress the few female prairie-chickens that showed up during our vigil - for nearly an hour and a half before we bid them adieu. We will all be forever grateful to the Bledsoe's for their kind hospitality that made this experience possible for us (and for so many others who have come here over the years)!

LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) – I don't know if you all picked up on this or not, but Chris and I were pretty darned nervous driving down those muddy roads in the dark looking for a Lesser Prairie-Chicken lek that we couldn't see! Between the muddy roads and the fog (FOG!!), our confidence at the start of our first lek experience wasn't very high. But, the fog lifted and we were at the right spot after the sun came up! Woo Hoo! Not as close as some other 'chickens' on this tour, our looks were, nonetheless, quite good after the fog cleared out completely.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*)

HORNED GREBE (*Podiceps auritus*) – Several in breeding dress at Lake Meredith.

EARED GREBE (*Podiceps nigricollis*)

WESTERN GREBE (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) – Quite numerous at the bigger reservoirs that we checked on the tour.

CLARK'S GREBE (*Aechmophorus clarkii*) – We really had to search through the much more numerous Western Grebes to find a few pairs of this look-alike. Our best views were at Fruit Growers Reservoir n.w. of Gunnison.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) – The large flock that took flight at Lake Meredith was quite a sight!

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*)

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) – On our final day at Windy Gap Reservoir.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*)

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Including at least one nest in the far northwest. [N]

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

GOLDEN EAGLE (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – This was a pretty decent trip for this regal species, with at least one being recorded on seven different days.

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*)

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – Accipiters, in general, were pretty scarce on this trip.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*)

NORTHERN GOSHAWK (*Accipiter gentilis*) – One of the big surprises on this tour was spotting this immature bird perched just off of the highway near Walden.

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Not a bad trip for this eagle, either, with at least a couple of active nests being seen on our drives. [N]

SWAINSON'S HAWK (*Buteo swainsoni*) – A pair of light-morph birds just west of the Kansas state line.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) [N]

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK (*Buteo lagopus*) – We found a few birds still lingering on the wintering grounds.

FERRUGINOUS HAWK (*Buteo regalis*) – A couple of soaring individuals - one in the southeast, one in the northeast - gave us some great looks. One of my favorite North American raptors!

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*)

Gruidae (Cranes)

SANDHILL CRANE (*Antigone canadensis*) – We didn't run into these until we got to the west side of the Continental Divide.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*)

MOUNTAIN PLOVER (*Charadrius montanus*) – One of the big targets for several folks on this tour - we don't JUST look for 'chickens' on this trip! - with a couple of fine experiences with a couple of pairs near Arriba in the northeast.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

WILSON'S SNIPE (*Gallinago delicata*) – In flight only for some in the group as we left the Gunnison area.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – It was a little early for most of the returning shorebirds here, but we did see this one a few of times during the tour.

LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*) – We had a nice comparison with the above Greater near Burlington.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BONAPARTE'S GULL (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – Good looks at this small migrant gull at Lake Meredith and Fruit Growers Reservoir.

FRANKLIN'S GULL (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*) – Our first were a couple of birds in high breeding plumage, including a definite pink blush to the underparts.

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*)

CALIFORNIA GULL (*Larus californicus*) – We started finding this one west of the Divide.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) [H]

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

WHITE-WINGED DOVE (*Zenaida asiatica*) – This one seems to be quite regular now throughout much of Kansas (where we saw ours).

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*)

Strigidae (Owls)

GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*) – Including an active nest near Arriba. [N]

BURROWING OWL (*Athene cunicularia*) – The plains on the east side was the place to see this one (we had it four days in a row!).

Apodidae (Swifts)

WHITE-THROATED SWIFT (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) – Our best looks were at the Colorado N.M. flying among the towering red-rock cliffs.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – Our only bird was seen by most at the Fruit Growers Reservoir.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

LEWIS'S WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes lewis*) – These strange woodpeckers were certainly nesting - or at least thinking seriously about it - in the big deciduous tree in Orchard City.

WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*) – A quick flyby female distracted some of us after we had enjoyed our morning experience with the Dusky Grouse. Did you know that the male and female Williamson's were originally described as separate species?

HAIRY WOODPECKER (ROCKY MTS.) (*Picoides villosus orius*)

AMERICAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER (ROCKY MTS.) (*Picoides dorsalis dorsalis*) – It took us a couple of tries, but we eventually found this one near Gunnison.

NORTHERN FLICKER (RED-SHAFTED) (*Colaptes auratus cafer*)

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*)

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – The group caught up with this one, a 'Prairie' Merlin, when we spotted a bird in a treetop while we were enjoying our Gambel's Quail near Grand Junction.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – I wondered at the time if that particular bird likes to hunt Chukar...

PRAIRIE FALCON (*Falco mexicanus*) – We ended up with sightings in both Colorado and Kansas.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

SAY'S PHOEBE (*Sayornis saya*)

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – Seen only on our first full day - I guess most had not returned from the wintering grounds during our visit.

NORTHERN SHRIKE (*Lanius excubitor*) – Wow! Nice spotting, Chris! This bird was certainly late and out of place south of Leadville - but there was no doubt about the i.d. My first Field Guides tour ever that scored on both shrikes!

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

GRAY JAY (ROCKY MTS.) (*Perisoreus canadensis capitalis*) – We found a very curious bird in Wildernest while we searched for rosy-finches.

PINYON JAY (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*) – We had to battle some wind at Colorado N.M. to find this one, but find them we did! This bird isn't usually quite so confiding as ours were.

STELLER'S JAY (INTERIOR) (*Cyanocitta stelleri macrolopha*) – Quite different from the races on the West Coast with white replacing all of the blue in the face of those races.

BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – Seen by some while we drove through Burlington.

WOODHOUSE'S SCRUB-JAY (*Aphelocoma woodhouseii*) – Now split from the California Scrub-Jay to the west, we had some good looks west of the Divide.

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE (*Pica hudsonia*) – Widespread on this tour. Our North American birds are now split from the Eurasian Magpie of the Old World.

CLARK'S NUTCRACKER (*Nucifraga columbiana*) – A quick flyby for some on our first visit to Wildernest.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*)

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*)

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – It was a little early in the season for swallows on this tour. We had just a couple of these north of Grand Junction.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE (*Poecile atricapillus*)

MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE (*Poecile gambeli*)

JUNIPER TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*) – We had an excellent study of a single bird in the windy junipers at Colorado NM.

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

BUSHTIT (INTERIOR) (*Psaltriparus minimus plumbeus*) [*]

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (INTERIOR WEST) (*Sitta carolinensis nelsoni*) – There may be a split of this one coming up soon...

PYGMY NUTHATCH (*Sitta pygmaea*) – Great studies of this tiny nuthatch - one of the world's smallest - at Wildernest.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

ROCK WREN (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) – The songs of this one and of the Canyon Wren below reverberating off the high, narrow canyon walls at Colorado NM was almost better than actually seeing these two Western wrens.

CANYON WREN (*Catherpes mexicanus*) – Nicely in the scope.

MARSH WREN (PLESIUS GROUP) (*Cistothorus palustris plesius*) [*]

BEWICK'S WREN (EREMOPHILUS GROUP) (*Thryomanes bewickii eremophilus*) – This bird's song sounded appreciably different to my ear from the birds I know well in SE Arizona.

Cinclidae (Dippers)

AMERICAN DIPPER (*Cinclus mexicanus*) – Chris certainly knew the right spot for this one! [N]

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

WESTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia mexicana*) – Rather surprisingly, not very many of these on this tour.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia currucoides*) – We had several memorable views of some gorgeous adult males.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE (*Myadestes townsendi*) – Scoped on the hill above Blue Mesa Reservoir near Gunnison.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*)

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (CURVIROSTRE GROUP) (*Toxostoma curvirostre oberholseri*) – The fog proved to be a bit of a challenge, but we really had no trouble finding this one east of Pueblo. This is the northern limit of this species' range.

SAGE THRASHER (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) – Fog and terrible backlighting really prevented us from getting a satisfying look at this small thrasher east of Pueblo.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) [I]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

AMERICAN PIPIT (*Anthus rubescens*) – Seen by some at Loveland Pass, where it breeds.

Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)

CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR (*Calcarius ornatus*) – We likely had 1000's of these birds in the fields near Arriba, but they afforded us very few good looks.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

BREWER'S SPARROW (*Spizella breweri*) – We saw a very early individual east of Pueblo, but it wasn't the greatest of looks.

BLACK-THROATED SPARROW (*Amphispiza bilineata*) – This was one of our distractions while we searched the hillsides for Chukar.

FOX SPARROW (SLATE-COLORED) (*Passerella iliaca schistacea*) – Several singing birds were around the campground at Black Canyon NP. The talk of splitting Fox Sparrow into several species seems to have gone nowhere.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (OREGON) (*Junco hyemalis oregonus*) – From the blind at the Gunnison Sage-Grouse lek only.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (PINK-SIDED) (*Junco hyemalis mearnsi*) – This seemed to be the most common migrant race that we came across. Sort of intermediate in plumage between the Oregon and the Gray-headed.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (GRAY-HEADED) (*Junco hyemalis caniceps*) – This is the breeding race in the Rockies here.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (ORIANTHA) (*Zonotrichia leucophrys oriantha*) – We had one early migrant east of Pueblo with some white-lored birds. This is the race that breeds in Colorado, but they hadn't yet arrived on the breeding grounds by mid-April.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S) (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – This race breeds far to the north in Canada and Alaska and is a winterer/migrant here.

VESPER SPARROW (*Poocetes gramineus*) – More early migrants east of Pueblo.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*)

CANYON TOWHEE (*Melospiza fusca*) – A couple of birds out in the cholla cactus along the Curve-billed Thrasher road east of Pueblo.

SPOTTED TOWHEE (*Pipilo maculatus*) – Our only good group looks were at Black Canyon NP. Our birds are in the 'maculatus' group of subspecies (subspecies *montanus*, to be more specific).

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – A couple of brief sightings in the southeast and in Kansas.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*) – Every single day on this tour - with a few very cooperative, memorable individuals.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) – Not many had returned yet to the breeding marshes along our route.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) – All of our sightings were in the southeast or in southwestern Kansas.

COMMON GRACKLE (BRONZED) (*Quiscalus quiscula versicolor*)

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – As far north as Fruita on the west side and pretty widespread in the southeast and in s.w. Kansas. The expansion of this species' range in the w. U.S. in the past 80 years has been pretty amazing!

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*)

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH (GRAY-CROWNED) (*Leucosticte tephrocotis tephrocotis*) – One of these was seen by a few folks at the feeders in Crested Butte.

BLACK ROSY-FINCH (*Leucosticte atrata*) – There weren't many of these, but they sure stood out from the numerous Brown-capped Rosy-Finches there! More of a Great Basin endemic than the others.

BROWN-CAPPED ROSY-FINCH (*Leucosticte australis*) – Easily the most abundant of the rosy-finches that we found and a s. Rocky Mountain endemic species.

PINE GROSBEAK (*Pinicola enucleator montana*) – A second visit to Wildernest finally got us our looks at this big finch, after tries elsewhere proved futile.

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*)

CASSIN'S FINCH (*Haemorhous cassinii*) – Excellent views of this highland finch at a feeder in the town of Crested Butte.

RED CROSSBILL (*Loxia curvirostra*) – That first look that we had on our way to Craig wasn't what I'd call satisfying, but we found them again at State Forest SP for some good roadside looks.

PINE SISKIN (*Spinus pinus*)

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH (*Spinus tristis*) – A couple of these at a feeder in Coalmont on our last day was all we could find on this first tour.

EVENING GROSBEAK (*Coccothraustes vespertinus brooksi*) – An added bonus to the rosy-finches at the Crested Butte feeders was a handful of these beauties.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) [H]

MAMMALS

DESERT COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) – Apparently the only species of cottontail that we saw on the entire trip.

WHITE-TAILED JACKRABBIT (*Lepus townsendi*) – Greatly outnumbered by the next species.

BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT (*Lepus californicus*) – A familiar and widespread western hare.

LEAST CHIPMUNK (*Tamias minimus*) – In the scope for most at Black Canyon NP.

HOPI CHIPMUNK (*Tamias rufus*) – Chris pointed one of these out at Colorado NM.

YELLOW-BELLIED MARMOT (*Marmota flaviventris*) – We found a bunch of these along the roadside on our way into Craig.

WYOMING GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus elegans*) – The most common and widespread *Spermophilus* on the tour, and only found west of the Divide.

THIRTEEN-LINED GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*)

ROCK SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus variegatus*) – That big, bushy tail always reminds folks of a *Sciurus* squirrel, but it's just a big *Spermophilus*.

GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus lateralis*) – I think only one van saw this one at Black Canyon NP.

BLACK-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) – The only prairie dog that we saw in the east of the state.

WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys leucurus*) – A couple of colonies around Walden at the end of the tour.

GUNNISON PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) – This was the common prairie dog of the West.

RED SQUIRREL (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*)

ORD'S KANGAROO RAT (*Dipodomys ordii*) – Chris and others saw this one, possibly up near Wray on our way into the Greater Prairie-Chicken lek.

MUSKRAT (*Ondatra zibethica*) – There were only couple of brief sightings of this aquatic rodent near the end of the tour.

RED FOX (*Vulpes vulpes*) – We had a couple of sightings this year, including one on the final day that squeaked in quite closely near Wray.

COYOTE (*Canis latrans*) – There were several sightings of this widespread and common canine. Many of them looked very healthy.

STRIPED SKUNK (*Mephitis mephitis*) – One in the the road in the middle of the day at State Forest SP was so out of character that it made us wonder if that individual may have been rabid.

ELK (*Cervus canadensis*) – Quite a few of these around Gunnison, but few elsewhere.

MULE DEER (*Odocoileus hemionus*) – The numbers (100+ daily) around Gunnison were really impressive!

WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – Only a few near Pueblo.

MOOSE (*Alces alces*) – Chris and I had never seen Moose grazing on grass before, so that peculiar posture of 'kneeling' on their front legs was quite a sight to see for us!

PRONGHORN (*Antilocapra americana*) – This tour is a particularly good one for this species, the only member of the North American endemic family Antilocapridae.

BIGHORN SHEEP (*Ovis canadensis*) – The animals that we saw from the bottom of the canyon in Colorado NM were particularly nice.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 146 bird taxa and 25 mammal taxa