



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Colorado Grouse II 2017**

Apr 9, 2017 to Apr 19, 2017  
Tom Johnson & Cory Gregory

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



*Amazing scenery abounds on this tour, but it's tough to beat the vistas at Colorado National Monument near Grand Junction. Photo by guide Tom Johnson.*

This gigantic, 2,428-mile loop through Colorado (and four neighboring states) was an amazing experience with excellent weather, great companionship, and remarkably good birding. We succeeded in our attempt to see 5 species of lekking open-lands grouse (Lesser and Greater prairie-chickens, Sharp-tailed Grouse, and Greater and Gunnison sage-grouse) and also added bonus White-tailed Ptarmigan and Dusky Grouse.

In addition to "grouse" around Colorado, we also got to sample an excellent diversity of Great Plains birds like Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Harris's Sparrow, Mountain Plover, McCown's Longspur, and Rocky Mountains birds like Red-naped and Williamson's sapsuckers, Lewis's and American Three-toed woodpeckers, Pinyon Jay, Brown-capped and Black rosy-finches, Evening Grosbeak, and much more.

Some of the exciting bonuses that we found on the trip included Long-eared Owl and Northern Pygmy-Owl, Gray Flycatcher, Plumbeous Vireo, Black-chinned Hummingbird, and Sagebrush Sparrow. A light southerly wind that blew through much of the tour helped to usher in newly arriving landbird and waterbird migrants. Fun mammals that we sighted along the way included Pronghorn, Moose, lots of different squirrels and chipmunks, Bighorn Sheep, and Beaver.

Part of the magic of this tour involved some extra routing that allowed us to visit a few bonus states in addition to Colorado and Kansas - with those big, comfortable Mercedes Sprinter vans, we just couldn't resist a bit more driving. For example, we nicked a corner of Nebraska, checked out sparrows in the sagebrush of eastern Utah, and enjoyed a Moose and a big pond full of ducks in southern Wyoming. A five state "Colorado" Grouse tour - pretty fun!

Cory and I would like to thank everyone for helping to make this tour such a rewarding experience, and we look forward to seeing you in the field again in the near future.

Good birding,

Tom

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**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

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**BIRDS**

*Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)*

**CANADA GOOSE** (*Branta canadensis*) – Common and widespread.

**GADWALL** (*Anas strepera*) – Widespread; seen almost every day.

**AMERICAN WIGEON** (*Anas americana*) – Fairly common.

**MALLARD** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Seen every day.

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL** (*Anas discors*) – A few showed well early on the tour, especially in some of the marshy reservoirs we visited on the Plains.

**CINNAMON TEAL** (*Anas cyanoptera*) – Fairly common and widespread, especially in the mountains.

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Anas clypeata*) – Rather common, especially on the Plains.

**NORTHERN PINTAIL** (*Anas acuta*) – Just a few left mixed in with other waterfowl.

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN)** (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – Rather common.

**CANVASBACK** (*Aythya valisineria*) – Ours were at Walden Reservoir and also at the duck pond near Laramie.

**REDHEAD** (*Aythya americana*) – A few were on Walden Reservoir and the duck pond near Laramie; one was at Lake Meredith, too.

**RING-NECKED DUCK** (*Aythya collaris*) – Just a few this time, including at the Doubletree Pond in Colorado Springs on our first afternoon.

**LESSER SCAUP** (*Aythya affinis*) – Scattered at various reservoirs on the trip.

**BUFFLEHEAD** (*Bucephala albeola*) – We saw two at the eastern end of Blue Mesa Reservoir.

**COMMON GOLDENEYE** (*Bucephala clangula*) – Plenty at Blue Mesa Reservoir.

**BARROW'S GOLDENEYE** (*Bucephala islandica*) – A few females were mixed in with a flock of scaup and Common Goldeneye at Blue Mesa Reservoir.

**COMMON MERGANSER** (*Mergus merganser*) – Scattered at various lakes, both in the plains and the mountains.

**RUDDY DUCK** (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – Our only stiff-tails were on reservoirs in the plains, but we encountered big flocks off ~100 on several occasions.

#### *Odontophoridae (New World Quail)*

**SCALED QUAIL** (*Callipepla squamata*) – These desert grassland specialists put on a great show along the IL Road east of Pueblo on our first full tour day.

**GAMBEL'S QUAIL** (*Callipepla gambelii*) – We found these lovely southwestern quail in desert neighborhoods just outside of Colorado National Monument near Grand Junction.

**NORTHERN BOBWHITE** (*Colinus virginianus*) – A pair hunkered down under a fence at Bledsoe Cattle Company, allowing us a good opportunity to ogle the male.

#### *Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)*

**RING-NECKED PHEASANT** (*Phasianus colchicus*) – Common in eastern Colorado and western Kansas. [H]

**GREATER SAGE-GROUSE** (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) – About 40 males gathered in the pre-dawn hours near Coalmont to strut their stuff in a clearing in the sagebrush. This was our final lek visit of the tour, and one of the very best. Male sage-grouse boomed from 20 feet away from us as we watched in amazement.

**GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE** (*Centrocercus minimus*) – Though they were distant, we eventually had some good scope views of these declining grouse at a lek near Gunnison. It was fun to watch for the males' "ponytails" as they threw their heads back and danced.

**WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN** (*Lagopus leucura altipetens*) – Whew! After a lot of scanning, Cory finally picked out an entirely white ptarmigan from the mountaintop at Loveland Pass.

**DUSKY GROUSE** (*Dendragapus obscurus obscurus*) – Two males and a female showed off at close range along the road through Colorado National Monument early one morning.

**SHARP-TAILED GROUSE** (*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*) – We visited a beautiful area near Steamboat Springs to watch the wing-spreading, foot-shuffling dance of these fine grouse.

**GREATER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN (PINNATUS)** (*Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus*) – The lek we visited at Bledsoe Cattle Company near Wray, Colorado offers a phenomenal viewing opportunity. We watched and listened as these active chickens strutted around, boomed, cackled, and put up their neck pinnae (which look like ears or even antennae!).

**LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN** (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) – This species has declined dramatically in recent years, and we now have to drive east into Kansas for a good shot at finding an active lek. A few males danced for a female at a lek near Dodge City, and we enjoyed great scope views from the side of a public farm road.

**WILD TURKEY** (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – Several sightings in eastern Colorado and Kansas.

#### *Podicipedidae (Grebes)*

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Our only one was in a pond near Holbrook Reservoir.

**HORNED GREBE** (*Podiceps auritus*) – Lake Meredith on our first day.

**EARED GREBE** (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – Excellent views and audio of displaying birds at Lake Cheraw.

**WESTERN GREBE** (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) – Numerous at a few reservoirs in the plains. We had nice comparisons with the next species at Lake Henry.

**CLARK'S GREBE** (*Aechmophorus clarkii*) – Good studies at Lakes Henry and Meredith on the plains.

#### *Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)*

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Quite common at several large reservoirs in the plains.

#### *Pelecanidae (Pelicans)*

**AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) – These massive waterbirds were fairly common at large reservoirs, including Lake Henry in the plains and beautiful Walden Reservoir in North Park.

#### *Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)*

**GREAT BLUE HERON** (*Ardea herodias*) – Fairly common throughout.

**SNOWY EGRET** (*Egretta thula*) – One was at Lake Cheraw.

#### *Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)*

**WHITE-FACED IBIS** (*Plegadis chihi*) – Two of these arriving migrants were at Walden Reservoir.

#### *Cathartidae (New World Vultures)*

**TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*) – Seen every day.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – A high flyover at Lake Meredith was our first, and we saw another one later in the trip while driving in the mountains.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

**GOLDEN EAGLE** (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – Several good views of this iconic raptor, including an adult on a massive stick nest near Craig.

**NORTHERN HARRIER** (*Circus cyaneus*) – Common in grasslands, especially in eastern Colorado and Kansas.

**SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** (*Accipiter striatus*) – One circled over with a Cooper's Hawk for comparison along the highway up to Crested Butte.

**COOPER'S HAWK** (*Accipiter cooperii*) – One circled with a Sharp-shinned Hawk below Crested Butte.

**BALD EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Fairly common along rivers and reservoirs. We saw a few nests in the western part of Colorado, and one scared up a big flock of ducks in Wyoming, too.

**SWAINSON'S HAWK** (*Buteo swainsoni*) – Very common, almost throughout our route.

**RED-TAILED HAWK** (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Common and widespread; seen every day.

**ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK** (*Buteo lagopus*) – A few showed well for us early on the trip on the eastern plains. These were lingering wintering birds about to head north for the summer.

**FERRUGINOUS HAWK** (*Buteo regalis*) – An adult on a nest in the Pawnee National Grasslands was a big highlight of our final day.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

**VIRGINIA RAIL** (*Rallus limicola*) – We heard a few of these secretive birds at marshes in western Colorado and near Denver.

**AMERICAN COOT** (*Fulica americana*) – A few were paddling around lakes that we visited early and late in the tour.

Gruidae (Cranes)

**SANDHILL CRANE** (*Antigone canadensis*) – Only a few were seen in NW Colorado during our travels, but one that flew right over our vans was particularly memorable.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

**BLACK-NECKED STILT** (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Four were at Lake Cheraw on the first full day.

**AMERICAN AVOCET** (*Recurvirostra americana*) – We found one on the Squirrel Creek Road near Colorado Springs, and another was at Lake Cheraw.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

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

**MOUNTAIN PLOVER** (*Charadrius montanus*) – After missing this species on our initial loop through the plains of Colorado (and Kansas), we reorganized some of our planned stops to allow for a visit to the Pawnee National Grassland on our final tour day. This paid off with excellent scope views of these fine open-land plovers in a huge prairie-dog town, with McCown's Longspurs singing in the distance.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

**LONG-BILLED CURLEW** (*Numenius americanus*) – Five were along "Raptor Alley" south of Walden.

**MARbled GODWIT** (*Limosa fedoa*) – A small flock hunkered down out of the wind at Walden Reservoir.

**BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** (*Calidris bairdii*) – One let us admire its sandy coloration and long-winged look on a farm pond in western Kansas.

**WILSON'S SNIPE** (*Gallinago delicata*) – Seen on several days; memorable views were those along the road at Hopper Ponds in eastern Colorado, and the one that was calling from atop a fence near Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

**WILSON'S PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus tricolor*) – A male/ female pair performed for us in a small marshy pond next to Walden Reservoir.

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – Just a few of these loud *Tringa*.

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*) – Two were at the Hopper Ponds along with Greater Yellowlegs.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

**BONAPARTE'S GULL** (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – Our first were in the distance at Lake Meredith; others were on the power reservoir south of Craig.

**FRANKLIN'S GULL** (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*) – Good views near Lake Meredith, Verhoeff Reservoir, and also at Walden Reservoir. The pink blush to the underparts and striking black/ white/ gray plumage of the adults at this time of year is simply breathtaking.

**RING-BILLED GULL** (*Larus delawarensis*) – A few were peppered in with other gulls on the eastern plains.

**CALIFORNIA GULL** (*Larus californicus*) – Common around Walden Reservoir.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Common around humans. [H]

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Very common around towns and agricultural areas.

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE** (*Zenaida asiatica*) – One was in the parking lot of our dinner restaurant in Garden City, Kansas.

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaida macroura*) – Common and widespread.

Strigidae (Owls)

**GREAT HORNED OWL** (*Bubo virginianus*) – We found this familiar owl on several occasions, including a dramatic and close nest in beautiful light at Bledsoe Cattle Company near Wray.

**NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL (ROCKY MTS.)** (*Glaucidium gnoma pinicola*) – One surprise bird started singing behind the bathrooms at the visitor center of Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP. We enjoyed good scope views as the bird continued to sing its repetitive, whistled song.

**BURROWING OWL** (*Athene cucularia*) – Fairly common on the eastern plains in Colorado and Kansas.

**LONG-EARED OWL** (*Asio otus*) – Another surprise owl! This one spooked from an unseen roost site at Pawnee National Grassland when we stopped to take a bathroom break. Fortunately, the bird landed on an exposed perch and we were able to scope it from a less threatening distance.

Apodidae (Swifts)

**WHITE-THROATED SWIFT** (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) – Excellent views of these tiny bicolored rockets at Black Canyon of the Gunnison and Colorado National Monument.

*Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)*

**BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD** (*Archilochus alexandri*) – A male perched up in the pinyon-juniper forest at Colorado National Monument.

*Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)*

**BELTED KINGFISHER** (*Megaceryle alcyon*) – Several calling flybys.

*Picidae (Woodpeckers)*

**LEWIS'S WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes lewis*) – One gave us an incredible spread-wing display in a large cottonwood in Buena Vista, CO while another called in the distance.

**WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKER** (*Sphyrapicus thyroideus*) – Max found a male at Genessee Mountain Park that he shared with the group. Then we found another one up near Rabbit Ears Pass. This is surely one of our finest looking woodpeckers in North America.

**RED-NAPE SAPSUCKER** (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*) – At least two birds were in an aspen grove at State Forest State Park near Walden.

**DOWNY WOODPECKER** (*Picoides pubescens*) – We found an Eastern bird in a woodlot NW of Dodge City, Kansas; later, a Rocky Mountains bird called and showed briefly at State Forest State Park.

**HAIRY WOODPECKER** (*Picoides villosus*) – An eastern bird was in the woodlot where we found Harris's Sparrows in Kansas; later, we found Rocky Mountains birds in Genessee Mountain Park and in Wildernest.

**AMERICAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER (ROCKY MTS.)** (*Picoides dorsalis dorsalis*) – A pair of these scarce woodpeckers were below Monarch Pass for some excellent views.

**NORTHERN FLICKER (YELLOW-SHAFTED)** (*Colaptes auratus auratus*) – Common in western Kansas.

**NORTHERN FLICKER (RED-SHAFTED)** (*Colaptes auratus cafer*) – Common from Denver west throughout the mountain region of Colorado.

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**AMERICAN KESTREL** (*Falco sparverius*) – Seen on every day of the tour!

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*) – Two adults were dive-bombing and playing in the wind at Colorado National Monument, where they nest.

**PRAIRIE FALCON** (*Falco mexicanus*) – Our first was a distant flyby near Arriba; later, one circled overhead in beautiful light while we were checking out some sagebrush near Coalmont.

*Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)*

**GRAY FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax wrightii*) – One that had just arrived from the south sang and perched atop short junipers in Colorado National Monument.

**EASTERN PHOEBE** (*Sayornis phoebe*) – Good (but brief) views of one individual in the company of a Say's Phoebe in the Harris's Sparrow woodlot in Kansas.

**SAY'S PHOEBE** (*Sayornis saya*) – Seen on every day of the tour.

**SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** (*Tyrannus forficatus*) – One was along the roadside during our drive across western Kansas.

*Laniidae (Shrikes)*

**LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE** (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – Seen on most days, especially in the plains.

*Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)*

**PLUMBEOUS VIREO** (*Vireo plumbeus*) – An early arrival was singing up a storm near the visitor center at Colorado National Monument.

*Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)*

**GRAY JAY (ROCKY MTS.)** (*Perisoreus canadensis capitalis*) – Excellent views at Rabbit Ears Pass in the company of some Golden-crowned Kinglets.

**PINYON JAY** (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*) – This semi-nomadic corvid showed nicely east of Gunnison and again at Colorado National Monument.

**STELLER'S JAY (INTERIOR)** (*Cyanocitta stelleri macrolopha*) – Fairly common in the conifer forests of the Rockies.

**BLUE JAY** (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – Seen only in Kansas during our drive from Dodge City to Wray, Colorado.

**WOODHOUSE'S SCRUB-JAY** (*Aphelocoma woodhouseii*) – These newly split jays (the interior species of the group formerly called "Western Scrub-Jay") were at Black Canyon and Colorado National Monument.

**BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE** (*Pica hudsonia*) – Rather common and widespread, especially in the West.

**CLARK'S NUTCRACKER** (*Nucifraga columbiana*) – Heard at Mount Crested Butte, and then seen in flight at Black Canyon.

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

**CHIHUAHUAN RAVEN** (*Corvus cryptoleucus*) – A pair of these small ravens circled over and gave their Mallard-like quacks during our first full tour day on the southeastern plains of Colorado.

**COMMON RAVEN** (*Corvus corax*) – Common and widespread, especially in the western portions of the tour.

*Alandidae (Larks)*

**HORNED LARK** (*Eremophila alpestris*) – Extremely common, especially in the Great Plains.

*Hirundinidae (Swallows)*

**NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW** (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – Two were seen near our hotel in Fruita.

**TREE SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Seen on several days.

**VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – Common at Black Canyon and Colorado National Monument.

**BANK SWALLOW** (*Riparia riparia*) – At least one circled over the avocet pond on Squirrel Creek Road near Colorado Springs.

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) – Fairly common as an arriving migrant.

**CLIFF SWALLOW** (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – Ours were at Lake Meredith and Walden Reservoir.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

**BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE** (*Poecile atricapillus*) – Fairly common in the middle elevations of the tour.

**MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE** (*Poecile gambeli*) – Several good views in higher elevation conifer forest in the Rockies.

**JUNIPER TITMOUSE** (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*) – Cory heard one singing as we drove through Colorado National Monument. Finding that one bird also led us to see Gray Flycatcher, Black-chinned Hummingbird, and Black-throated Gray Warbler at the same site!

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

**RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH** (*Sitta canadensis*) – Seen at several sites in the mountains including Genessee Park.

**WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (INTERIOR WEST)** (*Sitta carolinensis nelsoni*) – Several were at Genessee Mountain Park and again later at Colorado National Monument.

**PYGMY NUTHATCH** (*Sitta pygmaea*) – These little guys came bounding out of the pines at Genessee Mountain Park at the spot where we saw the Williamson's Sapsucker.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

**ROCK WREN** (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) – Great views in the scope of a calling and singing bird at Colorado National Monument.

**CANYON WREN** (*Catherpes mexicanus*) – We heard the amazing, cascading song of this lovely wren on several occasions at Colorado National Monument.

**BEWICK'S WREN (EREMOPHILUS GROUP)** (*Thryomanes bewickii eremophilus*) – Good views in the pinyon-juniper scrub at Colorado National Monument.

Poliophtilidae (Gnatcatchers)

**BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER** (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – Several were clearly newly arrived migrants in the junipers of Colorado National Monument.

Cinclidae (Dippers)

**AMERICAN DIPPER** (*Cinclus mexicanus*) – A pair was hanging around at Roaring Judy between Gunnison and Crested Butte. We even admired the white eyelids of these awesome little songbirds.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

**GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET** (*Regulus satrapa*) – Good views at Rabbit Ears Pass.

**RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET** (*Regulus calendula*) – After hearing a few singing migrants, we finally saw one late in the tour. All of ours were in the Rockies.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

**WESTERN BLUEBIRD** (*Sialia mexicana*) – Max spotted one along the road as we headed in to Black Canyon.

**MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** (*Sialia currucoides*) – Quite common in the montane portion of our tour! What an excellent shade of blue...

**TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE** (*Myadestes townsendi*) – We had one bird fly over, showing off its buff wing strip, at the Mount Crested Butte feeders.

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

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

**CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (CURVIROSTRE GROUP)** (*Toxostoma curvirostre oberholseri*) – We found these "desert" thrashers along the Squirrel Creek Road near Colorado Springs and also on the IL Road near Pueblo (in the company of Sage Thrashers on both occasions).

**BROWN THRASHER** (*Toxostoma rufum*) – One teed up and sang for us in the Harris's Sparrow woodlot in Kansas.

**SAGE THRASHER** (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) – We found several during our initial desert grassland birding stops near Colorado Springs and Pueblo. Later, when birding the Utah-Colorado border, we heard another one singing in the distance.

**NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus polyglottos*) – One was in the Harris's Sparrow woodlot in Kansas.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

**EUROPEAN STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Common in towns and cities. [I]

Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)

**CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR** (*Calcarius ornatus*) – A few of these skittish prairie longspurs flew around us calling while we searched the grasslands near Arriba.

**MCCOWN'S LONGSPUR** (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*) – After an initial sighting of a drab bird near Arriba, the beautiful males that we saw in Pawnee National Grassland on our final day were certainly a welcome sight.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (AUDUBON'S)** (*Setophaga coronata auduboni*) – A few showed up in Montrose during our lunch break there. We also saw a neat Myrtle x Audubon's intergrade male near Holbrook Reservoir on the plains.

**BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER** (*Setophaga nigrescens*) – One was singing in pinyon-juniper habitat, perhaps on territory, at Colorado National Monument.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

**GRASSHOPPER SPARROW** (*Ammodramus savannarum*) – We scoped a singing bird at the Kansas Lesser Prairie-Chicken lek. Another was singing the next morning at Bledsoe Cattle Company while we watched Greater Prairie-Chickens.

**CHIPPING SPARROW** (*Spizella passerina*) – A few were at Black Canyon and Colorado National Monument.

**BREWER'S SPARROW** (*Spizella breweri*) – We had some fine looks at a few territorial, singing birds on the Colorado-Utah line west of Grand Junction.

**BLACK-THROATED SPARROW** (*Amphispiza bilineata*) – These striking birds posed nicely for us at Devil's Kitchen in Colorado National Monument.

**LARK SPARROW** (*Chondestes grammacus*) – A few posed along roadsides near Dodge City, Kansas after we enjoyed the lekking Lesser Prairie-Chickens.

**FOX SPARROW (SLATE-COLORED)** (*Passerella iliaca schistacea*) – Good views of singing birds at Roaring Judy near Gunnison.

**DARK-EYED JUNCO (PINK-SIDED)** (*Junco hyemalis mearnsi*) – A few were mixed in with rosy-finches in the snow up at Mount Crested Butte.  
**DARK-EYED JUNCO (GRAY-HEADED)** (*Junco hyemalis caniceps*) – This was the common junco that we found repeatedly in the Rockies.  
**WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S)** (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – Good views, primarily on the first days of the tour out on the plains.  
**HARRIS'S SPARROW** (*Zonotrichia querula*) – A stop in a woodlot NW of Dodge City allowed us to find these central flyway specialties at the western edge of their migration route. An added bonus of the Kansas portion of the tour!  
**SAGEBRUSH SPARROW** (*Artemisospiza nevadensis*) – Our swing through some sage habitat on the Utah state line allowed us to find these Great Basin specialties on breeding territories. Excellent views!  
**VESPER SPARROW** (*Pooecetes gramineus*) – Fairly common on the eastern plains on the first days of the tour.  
**SAVANNAH SPARROW** (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – Just a few were seen along roadsides as we headed west across Colorado's eastern plains.  
**SONG SPARROW** (*Melospiza melodia*) – Several were spotted in riparian areas throughout the tour.  
**CANYON TOWHEE** (*Melospiza fusca*) – Our morning jaunt on the IL Road near Pueblo helped us find this localized species (in the same habitat as the Curve-billed and Sage Thrashers).  
**GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE** (*Pipilo chlorurus*) – While we were absorbed in watching the Dusky Grouse at Black Canyon, one of these very fine sparrows climbed to the top of a tree right behind us and began to sing his brains out. Awesome views!  
**SPOTTED TOWHEE** (*Pipilo maculatus*) – These beautiful songsters were fairly common and vocally conspicuous at Black Canyon.

#### Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

**NORTHERN CARDINAL** (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – Our eastern swing into Kansas allowed us to find this lovely and familiar eastern songbird.

#### Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

**RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Common throughout.  
**WESTERN MEADOWLARK** (*Sturnella neglecta*) – A common song, especially in the plains.  
**YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) – Plenty were seen on five days, though our initial views at Lake Meredith couldn't be topped.  
**BREWER'S BLACKBIRD** (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) – Just a few were scattered throughout the trip.  
**COMMON GRACKLE (BRONZED)** (*Quiscalus quiscula versicolor*) – Common in the eastern portion of the tour route.  
**GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – Fairly common near agricultural/ livestock areas on the eastern portion of the tour route.  
**BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD** (*Molothrus ater*) – Common on the eastern portion of the route, usually around other blackbirds.

#### Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

**BLACK ROSY-FINCH** (*Leucosticte atrata*) – Two showed up in a big flock of feeding Brown-capped Rosy-finches at Mount Crested Butte.  
**BROWN-CAPPED ROSY-FINCH** (*Leucosticte australis*) – These rosies are nearly Colorado breeding endemics, so it was excellent to see plenty of them scattered around a few feeding areas in the mountains.  
**HOUSE FINCH** (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – Fairly common.  
**CASSIN'S FINCH** (*Haemorhous cassinii*) – Great views in the mountains - ours were at Crested Butte and Moose Visitor Center.  
**RED CROSSBILL** (*Loxia curvirostra*) – Excellent views at Wildernest and again at Rabbit Ears Pass. Both times, we got to see these nomadic finches down on the ground.  
**PINE SISKIN** (*Spinus pinus*) – A few scattered flocks appeared for us in the mountains.  
**LESSER GOLDFINCH** (*Spinus psaltria*) – A couple of birds called and showed high in the trees near our lunch stop in Montrose.  
**AMERICAN GOLDFINCH** (*Spinus tristis*) – Our only ones were in a big, noisy flock near Holbrook Reservoir on the plains.  
**EVENING GROSBEAK** (*Coccothraustes vespertinus brooksi*) – About 20 roamed around Crested Butte, initially evading us, but we all eventually saw these amazing finches really well.

#### Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Common in towns. [I]

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## MAMMALS

**DESERT COTTONTAIL** (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) – These were the common bunnies on the eastern plains (including Denver).  
**BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT** (*Lepus californicus*) – This was the big jackrabbit that we saw all over eastern Colorado and Kansas.  
**LEAST CHIPMUNK** (*Tamias minimus*) – Fairly common in western Colorado.  
**HOPI CHIPMUNK** (*Tamias rufus*) – At least a couple were near the visitor center at Colorado National Monument.  
**WYOMING GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Spermophilus elegans*) – Fairly common in the western half of the state.  
**THIRTEEN-LINED GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*) – One showed off at the edge of a farm road in Arriba, CO.  
**SPOTTED GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Spermophilus spilosoma*) – Good views near Holbrook Reservoir on the plains.  
**ROCK SQUIRREL** (*Spermophilus variegatus*) – Seen several times, but the best views were along the rocky shoreline of Holbrook Reservoir.  
**GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Spermophilus lateralis*) – A quick view of one at Black Canyon.  
**BLACK-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG** (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) – Abundant in the eastern plains.  
**WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG** (*Cynomys leucurus*) – Fairly common around North Park/ Walden.  
**GUNNISON PRAIRIE DOG** (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) – We saw these range-restricted prairie-dogs on several occasions around Gunnison.  
**FOX SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus niger*) – A few were in towns on the eastern plains during our drive toward the mountains.  
**RED SQUIRREL** (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) – We heard the scolding of this conifer-loving squirrel in Wildernest.  
**ORD'S KANGAROO RAT** (*Dipodomys ordii*) – One was hopping along a sand road at Bledsoe Cattle Company.  
**BEAVER** (*Castor canadensis*) – One swam across a pond in Meeker, CO.  
**RED FOX** (*Vulpes vulpes*) – One past us in Gunnison.

**COYOTE** (*Canis latrans*) – These big handsome canids posed on several occasions. Those in Cory's van even got to see one do an exaggerated plunge dive for a rodent in Crested Butte.

**ELK** (*Cervus canadensis*) – Common in the western part of CO.

**MULE DEER** (*Odocoileus hemionus*) – Common, especially near Gunnison.

**MOOSE** (*Alces alces*) – One was at the side of the highway in Wyoming (just north of the Colorado border).

**PRONGHORN** (*Antilocapra americana*) – Common in open grasslands.

**BIGHORN SHEEP** (*Ovis canadensis*) – Excellent views in the mountains, with some animals actually walking across the road in front of us between Silverthorne and Buena Vista.

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## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

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**Totals for the tour: 175 bird taxa and 23 mammal taxa**