



Field Guides Tour Report

Colorado Grouse I 2018

Apr 5, 2018 to Apr 15, 2018
Tom Johnson & Ned Brinkley

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



*Group member Claudia Bird captured this photo as we stalked McCown's and Chestnut-collared longspurs on the plains of Arriba. It's the cover photo for the debut album of our new country-western band, *Scopes n' Spurs*.*

The courtship of North America's open-land grouse puts some of the most spectacular bird behavior in the world on full display. Our 2018 Colorado Grouse tour sought to take in the dances of five species of lekking grouse (Lesser and Greater Prairie-Chickens, Sharp-tailed Grouse, and Gunnison and Greater Sage-Grouse) while sampling the extraordinary diversity of BOTCs (birds-other-than-chickens) and the varied landscapes that the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains have to offer. Though the weather threw us a few curveballs with snow on several days, we adjusted accordingly and enjoyed spectacular birding during our ten-day tour.

We started off with a long loop through the western Great Plains, first by birding desert grasslands near Pueblo and checking reservoirs along the Arkansas River Valley on our drive into Kansas. This was rather productive, and we saw Scaled Quail, Sage and Curve-billed thrashers, Clark's and Western grebes, Baird's Sandpipers, and even a few rare vagrants in the form of a male Vermilion Flycatcher and an adult Little Blue Heron. Our jaunt into Kansas set us up to visit a lek of the rare and declining Lesser Prairie-Chicken. Even though we had to sweep 1-2" of fresh snow off the vans in the morning, we made it safely to the lek and watched 9 splendid Lesser Prairie-Chickens dancing against a backdrop of snow-covered grassland. We were rewarded for traveling so far east with treats like Eastern Meadowlark and Harris's Sparrows. Heading northwest back into Colorado, we visited the Bledsoe Cattle Company in Wray for a fantastic morning viewing displaying Greater Prairie-Chickens mere yards away from our vehicle blinds. As we trucked on toward Denver, we visited an area near Arriba (not pronounced how you'd guess!) that has served as a migration staging ground for McCown's and Chestnut-collared longspurs, and saw good numbers of both of these "prairie longspurs." Also wonderful were the two Mountain Plovers standing alongside the road.

Having finished our plains loop, we headed up into the Rocky Mountains west of Denver. Our initial plans to search for White-tailed Ptarmigan at Loveland Pass were scuttled due to blowing snow, but we did watch feeders covered in Red Crossbills, Pine Grosbeaks, and rosy-finches near Silverthorne, so all was not lost. With an ongoing snowstorm still looming on the higher mountain passes, we headed through a lower elevation route into western Colorado. After a successful morning viewing the dances of the rare and localized Gunnison Sage-Grouse, we met up with Field Guides leader Eric Hynes at his home outside of Telluride for the best rosy-finch viewing I've ever had in Colorado! Eric had kept his feeders well-stocked through the spring, and we were swarmed with ~150 rosy-finches of all expected taxa, including a remarkable 12+ Black Rosy-finches. We watched from only a few feet away (see the video included below) as these beautiful songbirds gorged on seed. Fantastic - thanks Eric!

The scrubby forest of Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park came through with astounding views of male Dusky Grouse displaying along the road edges - we even heard the very deep humming song of a few of these uncommon grouse (Listen to the audio recording embedded below - I was holding my microphone about 2 feet away from the grouse as it hummed!).

Heading north, we explored the Grand Junction area and the dramatic landscape of Colorado National Monument, finding Gambel's Quail, Pinyon Jays, Juniper Titmice, Sagebrush Sparrows, Lewis's Woodpeckers, and a bonus Western Screech-Owl. A scenic drive northeast to Steamboat Springs put us in position to search for Sharp-tailed Grouse and Greater Sage-Grouse, our final two lekking species. We had a snowy but fun show from the Sharp-tailed Grouse at their rural lek, and even got to see an angry male Dusky Grouse chasing the Sharpies around. On our final morning in North Park, we ventured to a traditional roadside lek of Greater Sage-Grouse, and spent hours watching the otherworldly display of these massive grouse - over 50 of them patrolled around the area at close range.

On the way back to Denver, we stopped to see dozens of Barrow's Goldeneye at Windy Gap Reservoir, Bighorn Sheep along the side of the road, and made another trip to Loveland Pass in the snow. This time, a few group members were fortunate to spot a White-tailed Ptarmigan in flight, but up-close views eluded most of us. Downhill in Denver, we celebrated the end of our travels with a delicious Italian dinner.

Thanks to all in our group for making this long road trip a delightful, congenial affair. We were all very fortunate to have Ned Brinkley's company and leadership on this trip, and I want to thank him for stepping in as a leader on short notice.

Thank you, and good birding!

Tom

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 (*Anser caerulescens caerulescens*) – We saw these lingering migrants at Holbrook Reservoir and Verhoeff Reservoir on the Colorado plains.

ROSS'S GOOSE (*Anser rossii*) – One was with Cackling Geese at the Salisbury Equestrian Park south of Denver; others were mixed with Snow Geese at Verhoeff Reservoir, too.

CACKLING GOOSE (*Branta hutchinsii*) – About 30 of these small, stubby-billed white-cheeked geese were at the Salisbury Equestrian Park south of Denver. In most years, this species has moved north before the start of our tours in early April.

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) – Widespread; seen every day.

WOOD DUCK (*Aix sponsa*) – Two were near the vagrant Little Blue Heron at Holbrook Reservoir.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Spatula discors*) – Small flocks were on lakes on the plains of eastern Colorado.

CINNAMON TEAL (*Spatula cyanoptera*) – Just a few were mixed in with other ducks across Colorado.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Spatula clypeata*) – Common and widespread; seen on most days.

GADWALL (*Mareca strepera*) – Flocks of dozens were seen at many of our waterfowl-filled ponds and lakes.

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Mareca americana*) – Large groups lingered at many ponds and lakes.

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

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – A few flocks were on lakes on the eastern plains of Colorado; more were at Walden Reservoir in North Park.

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

CANVASBACK (*Aythya valisineria*) – 4 on Lake Meredith; 70 more on windy Walden Reservoir.

REDHEAD (*Aythya americana*) – Most of ours were in the huge flock of waterfowl at Walden Reservoir - we saw about 65 there.

RING-NECKED DUCK (*Aythya collaris*) – Scattered sightings, usually mixed with scaup.

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*) – We saw dozens of these divers at some of the deeper lakes that we visited. Our high count was 80 at Walden Reservoir.

BUFFLEHEAD (*Bucephala albeola*) – Small flocks were present at several ponds and lakes.

COMMON GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala clangula*) – We saw about 8 at Walden Reservoir and 40 more at Windy Gap Reservoir.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala islandica*) – We found over 25 of these scarce and handsome divers at Windy Gap Reservoir in the mountains.

HOODED MERGANSER (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) – Two female-types were at the Otter Pond in Montrose.

COMMON MERGANSER (*Mergus merganser*) – Ours were at Walden Reservoir and Sweitzer Lake.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – Two were at Holbrook Reservoir, and another was at the Otter Pond in Montrose (where unexpected).

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – Small numbers at many stops, mostly in marshy ponds and lakes.

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

NORTHERN BOBWHITE (*Colinus virginianus*) – Two members of the group saw one of these quail in a hedgerow at the Bledsoe Cattle Company in Wray.

SCALED QUAIL (*Callipepla squamata*) – Great views in desert grasslands on our first two days near Hanover and on the IL Road near Pueblo.

GAMBEL'S QUAIL (*Callipepla gambelii*) – Our search was initially hampered by strong winds, but we eventually tracked down some of these desert quail in neighborhoods outside of Colorado National Monument.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

RING-NECKED PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*) – Common on the plains of eastern Colorado and Kansas. [I]

GREATER SAGE-GROUSE (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) – This was the final lekking species of grouse that we visited on the tour, and it was a fine way to wrap things up. We arrived in the darkness and watched as 55 of these massive grouse strutted and popped their egg yolk-colored chest sacs for the females that gathered. At close range, the sight and sound was overwhelming.

GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE (*Centrocercus minimus*) – We enjoyed great views of 22 of these rare and highly localized grouse as they danced through the sagebrush.

WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN (*Lagopus leucura altipetens*) – A few group members saw one of these white beauties fly past at Loveland Pass, but most of us struck out this time.

DUSKY GROUSE (*Dendragapus obscurus obscurus*) – We had an extraordinary time with this uncommon species on this year's tour. On our first evening at Black Canyon of the Gunnison, we saw one male strutting around in the campground. The next morning, we watched 5 (!) different males as they displayed and hooted along the edges of the roads within the national park. This species has a very low frequency song, and it was very special indeed for us to be close enough to hear the deep humming of these special birds. Play the file at right -> to listen to an audio recording made by holding a microphone about 2 feet away from one of these humming Dusky Grouse.

SHARP-TAILED GROUSE (*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*) – At least 9 birds showed up to dance for us at the edge of an oak thicket in northern Colorado. A few things were particularly entertaining. First, a male Dusky Grouse appeared on the scene and chased the Sharp-tailed around mercilessly. Later, an errant Sharp-tailed flew straight at us and nearly landed on one group member before veering off and alighting on a fence post 20 feet away. Holy smokes! Mike Neale's great photo (below) commemorates the latter sighting nicely.

GREATER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN (PINNATUS) (*Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus*) – We spent a morning with 32 of these boisterous grouse on the sandhills of Wray, Colorado. The sound of the whooping, booming, foot-stamping, and cackling made this visit unforgettable.

LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) – We had to head far to the east this year, but we managed to greet dawn in the company of 9 of these rare and declining grouse on their dancing stage in arid grasslands in Kansas.

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – These remarkable birds were seen on most days of the tour!

Podicipedidae (Grebes).

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – We saw these small grebes at Sweitzer Lake and Walden Reservoir.

EARED GREBE (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – Great views of these birds in their fine breeding plumage at Fruitgrowers Reservoir.

WESTERN GREBE (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) – Regular sightings of these handsome grebes on larger bodies of water throughout the tour.

CLARK'S GREBE (*Aechmophorus clarkii*) – We were fortunate to compare these grebes to the closely related Western Grebes on Lake Meredith. It was great to see the white face, white flanks, and bright yellow-orange bill of the Clark's.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags).

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Fairly widespread on larger reservoirs.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans).

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) – Plenty at Lake Meredith and Walden Reservoir.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns).

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – Scattered sightings throughout the journey, with plenty at Lake Meredith and Fruitgrowers Reservoir.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) – One was tucked in to the shoreline a long way off at Sweitzer Lake.

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*) – Wow - this navy-and-purple adult was a rare sighting in the outflow below the dam at Holbrook Reservoir on Colorado's eastern plains.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills).

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) – Seven were in the flats adjacent to Fruitgrowers Reservoir near Delta.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures).

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Common; seen on most days of the trip.

Pandionidae (Osprey).

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – We found a few at nesting sites in western Colorado.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites).

GOLDEN EAGLE (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – Plenty of views of these impressive raptors. Memorable were the close birds in Kansas and western CO, and the bird that was being chased around by an angry pair of Peregrine Falcons near Telluride.

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus hudsonius*) – Very common in the grasslands of eastern Colorado and western Kansas.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – One sailed over near Bonny Reservoir.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*) – Scattered sightings of this common Accipiter.

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – These huge raptors showed nicely on several occasions - a few adults were even attending a nest along the side of I-70 in western Colorado.

SWAINSON'S HAWK (*Buteo swainsoni*) – Particularly nice views in North Park during a snow squall.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Seen just about everywhere on the tour.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK (*Buteo lagopus*) – These lovely Buteo hawks lingered in large numbers for our tour this year. We easily saw over 20 during our travels, mostly on the Plains.

FERRUGINOUS HAWK (*Buteo regalis*) – One was soaring over the exit of the Denver International Airport as we began the tour - and it was our only one!

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots).

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*) – Widespread on lakes and ponds.

Gruidae (Cranes).

SANDHILL CRANE (*Antigone canadensis*) – Scattered sightings in western Colorado, plus the group of 60 that migrated overhead during our goose stop south of Denver on the first afternoon.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets).

AMERICAN AVOCET (*Recurvirostra americana*) – One was at Holbrook Reservoir.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings).

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Common, especially in the Great Plains.

MOUNTAIN PLOVER (*Charadrius montanus*) – Two of these regional specialties were in the plowed fields south of Arriba.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies).

LONG-BILLED CURLEW (*Numenius americanus*) – Ned spotted 9 of these beautiful curlews in a flooded pasture in North Park on our final day.

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER (*Calidris bairdii*) – Two were at the edge of the slop ponds at the Lake Meredith feedlots.

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – Ours were mixed in with waterfowl during a roadside stop at Verhoeff Reservoir.

GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – One was at Holbrook Reservoir.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers).

BONAPARTE'S GULL (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – We saw a few between Sweitzer Lake and Fruitgrowers Reservoir in western Colorado.

FRANKLIN'S GULL (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*) – Migrants were at Sweitzer Lake, Fruitgrowers Reservoir, and Walden Reservoir. These lovely pink-washed gulls were on their way north from the wintering grounds in western South America.

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*) – Several flocks at lakes throughout the journey.

CALIFORNIA GULL (*Larus californicus*) – Common at Walden Reservoir, where they nest.

HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus*) – One flew past us at Lake Meredith.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves).

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Only near people. [I]

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Common around people, especially in agricultural areas.

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – Seen almost every day of the tour.

Strigidae (Owls).

WESTERN SCREECH-OWL (*Megascops kennicottii*) – One was day-roosting in a large cottonwood snag outside Palisade, CO. We probably wouldn't have seen it unless we'd stopped to admire the Lewis's Woodpeckers on the same snag! This is the first time I've seen this species during this primarily diurnal tour.

GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*) – The bird nesting at Bledsoe Cattle Company gave us some close views as it glared from the top of its stump.

BURROWING OWL (*Athene cunicularia*) – Repeated sightings of these lovely owls on the eastern plains.

Apodidae (Swifts).

WHITE-THROATED SWIFT (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) – Common over rocky canyonlands in western Colorado, where we heard them screaming and saw them rocketing through the sky.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers).

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle alcyon*) – A few sightings along rivers in the Telluride area.

Picidae (Woodpeckers).

LEWIS'S WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes lewis*) – Two were working on a large dead snag outside Palisade - their presence brought our attention to a Western Screech-Owl that was day-roosting in a cavity.

RED-NAPED SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*) – A migrant bounded past us while we were out of the vans watching a moose in North Park.

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*) – One visited feeders in Telluride.

HAIRY WOODPECKER (ROCKY MTS.) (*Picoides villosus orius*) – One was in the Silverthorne area while we were watching finches.

NORTHERN FLICKER (YELLOW-SHAFTED) (*Colaptes auratus auratus*) – We saw a few on the plains of eastern Colorado and Kansas.

NORTHERN FLICKER (RED-SHAFTED) (*Colaptes auratus cafer*) – The bulk of the flickers (and all of the ones that we saw west of Denver) that we saw in our travels were these red-shafted birds.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras).

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – Fairly common on the eastern plains of Colorado and Kansas.

MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*) – A pair of European birders pointed out a beautiful pale Prairie Merlin on the edge of the Colorado National Monument.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – We saw pairs at Colorado National Monument and also on the outskirts of Telluride.

PRAIRIE FALCON (*Falco mexicanus*) – A pair soared overhead during our drive between Rifle and Meeker.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers).

EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*) – A pair appeared to be nesting under a bridge at the small woodlot we birded after leaving Dodge City, KS.

SAY'S PHOEBE (*Sayornis saya*) – Scattered sightings of this open-land flycatcher.

VERMILION FLYCATCHER (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) – A bright red male was a stakeout vagrant on a fence near Hanover, south of Colorado Springs.

Laniidae (Shrikes).

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – Several sightings in the arid grasslands of eastern Colorado on the first days of the tour.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies).

PINYON JAY (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*) – It took quite a bit of looking this year, but we eventually tracked down a group of 8 of these fine jays for great views on the edge of Colorado National Monument.

STELLER'S JAY (INTERIOR) (*Cyanocitta stelleri macrolopha*) – Widespread in the mountains of western Colorado.

WOODHOUSE'S SCRUB-JAY (*Aphelocoma woodhouseii*) – Quite common in the scrub at Black Canyon of the Gunnison and Colorado National Monument.

BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE (*Pica hudsonia*) – Common and widespread.

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – Seen almost everywhere.

COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Widespread, especially in the mountains.

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*) – Common in most open habitats we visited. On the plains of eastern Colorado and western Kansas, this is one of the most abundant species of birds.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – Two loped overhead at the Otter Pond in Montrose.

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Returning migrants were fairly widespread, with a high count of ~130 overhead at the Rifle rest stop along I-70.

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – Two at Holbrook Reservoir were perhaps a bit early.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – We saw 6 at Holbrook Reservoir.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE (*Poecile atricapillus*) – These widespread chickadees were on the eastern plains at Bonny Reservoir and also in the mountains at Black Canyon of the Gunnison and the Moose Visitor Center.

MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE (*Poecile gambeli*) – Common in montane conifer forests.

JUNIPER TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*) – We had some nice views of these rather plain, retiring songbirds near the visitor center at Colorado National Monument.

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

BUSH TIT (INTERIOR) (*Psaltriparus minimus plumbeus*) – We found bubbling, bounding flocks at Black Canyon of the Gunnison and Colorado National Monument.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH (*Sitta canadensis*) – One was at Genesee Mountain Park.

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (INTERIOR WEST) (*Sitta carolinensis nelsoni*) – We saw this interior form at Genesee Mountain Park and at the Rifle rest stop.

PYGMY NUTHATCH (*Sitta pygmaea*) – A small but vociferous flock came in overhead at Genesee Mountain Park.

Certhiidae (Treecreepers)

BROWN CREEPER (*Certhia americana*) – One was quite responsive along the roadside at Genesee Mountain Park.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

ROCK WREN (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) – Two bobbed up and down on the rock shelves along the walls of Coal Canyon.

BEWICK'S WREN (MEXICANUS GROUP) (*Thryomanes bewickii eremophilus*) – We heard these widespread western wrens at several points along our drive through Colorado National Monument. [1*]

Cinclidae (Dippers)

AMERICAN DIPPER (*Cinclus mexicanus*) – A few showed at very close range as we walked along the small stream through the middle of Telluride. I always enjoy seeing their peculiar white eyelids flashing against the dark water and streamside rocks.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*) – One was at the Black Canyon of the Gunnison with a few Black-capped Chickadees.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

WESTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia mexicana*) – Good views at Genesee Mountain Park and Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia currucoides*) – Fairly widespread in open habitats at higher elevations in the western part of Colorado.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – Just about everywhere. It seemed like many migrants were moving through the eastern plains during our eastern Colorado/ Kansas circuit at the beginning of the tour.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (CURVIROSTRE GROUP) (*Toxostoma curvirostre oberholseri*) – A few perched up nicely in cholla cactus in the desert grasslands near Hanover. This species is fairly restricted in range and habitat along our tour route.

SAGE THRASHER (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) – We found these small, streaky thrashers outside of Pueblo and again near Coalmont.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Common around humans. [1]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

AMERICAN PIPIT (*Anthus rubescens*) – We saw these walking tail-bobbers on several occasions - one along the edge of Fruitgrowers Reservoir provided our best view of the trip.

Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)

CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR (*Calcarius ornatus*) – We found ~100 of these birds at a migrant stopover site in agricultural fields near Arriba. Though it took some time, we eventually had some close males that we were able to view nicely through our scopes.

MCCOWN'S LONGSPUR (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*) – Roughly 70 were in the agricultural fields of Arriba. They were initially challenging to see well, but we eventually had a good look at a male that sat out in the open for us. It was instructive to see this species side-by-side with Chestnut-collared Longspurs.

Passerellidae (New World Buntings and Sparrows)

LARK SPARROW (*Chondestes grammacus*) – Two were with other sparrows on the roadside at the small woodlot we checked northwest of Dodge City.

FOX SPARROW (SLATE-COLORED) (*Passerella iliaca schistacea*) – Singing in the thickets of Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP; we eventually squeaked one in for some good views in the campground.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (SLATE-COLORED) (*Junco hyemalis hyemalis*) – One of these widespread juncos was at Bonny Reservoir on the plains.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (OREGON) (*Junco hyemalis oregonus*) – A few migrants were scattered through the flocks of juncos and sparrows in the mountains.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (PINK-SIDED) (*Junco hyemalis mearnsi*) – Good views of a few sprinkled in with flocks of Gray-headed Juncos at feeders and in roadside flocks.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (GRAY-HEADED) (*Junco hyemalis caniceps*) – This is the common breeding junco throughout the mountains of Colorado - we saw many!

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S) (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – We saw small flocks of these common migrants across the whole tour route; during our trip, they were most common on the eastern plains.

HARRIS'S SPARROW (*Zonotrichia querula*) – At least 3 of these central flyway migrants were mixed in with a flock of White-crowned Sparrows NW of Dodge City, Kansas.

SAGEBRUSH SPARROW (*Artemisiospiza nevadensis*) – We found two of these habitat-specific sparrows in, yep, sagebrush! Sagebrush Sparrow is the interior form of the species complex formerly known as "Sage Sparrow" (Bell's Sparrow is the more westerly sister species of Sagebrush Sparrow).

VESPER SPARROW (*Poocetes gramineus*) – We saw a few in eastern Colorado (Lake Meredith) and western Kansas.

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – Two migrants were at Fruitgrowers Reservoir.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*) – Only a few sightings along the edges of lakes and rivers.

SPOTTED TOWHEE (*Pipilo maculatus*) – Abundant at Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP, where we saw several perched up and singing.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – A lovely red male was singing from the treetops behind the restaurant where we ate dinner in Wray, Colorado. We had a nice view in the scope before heading in for salads, steaks, and some celebratory brews.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*) – Common and widespread in grasslands.

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*) – We heard one singing its pure, whistled song at the Lesser Prairie-Chicken lek in Kansas. [∗]

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Common.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*) – Plenty were mixed in with large blackbird flocks on the eastern plains.

COMMON GRACKLE (BRONZED) (*Quiscalus quiscula versicolor*) – Scattered sightings in the Denver area and along the Arkansas River Valley.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – Small numbers on the eastern plains.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

EVENING GROSBEAK (*Coccothraustes vespertinus brooksi*) – Great views at close range at feeders in Telluride!

PINE GROSBEAK (*Pinicola enucleator montana*) – About 10 of these large, stub-billed finches were hanging out with crossbills and rosy-finches in Silverthorne.

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH (HEPBURN'S) (*Leucosticte tephrocotis littoralis*) – Good sightings of these gray-faced rosies at Silverthorne and especially at Eric's feeders in Telluride.

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH (GRAY-CROWNED) (*Leucosticte tephrocotis tephrocotis*) – The widespread nominate race; we saw these really well at Eric's feeders in Telluride.

BLACK ROSY-FINCH (*Leucosticte atrata*) – Though we did see one briefly and backlit in the trees at Silverthorne, the best viewing came later when we saw 12+ at Eric's feeders near Telluride. This was the best experience I've had with the species in Colorado. A lifer for many in our group!

BROWN-CAPPED ROSY-FINCH (*Leucosticte australis*) – This is the common rosy-finch in Colorado, but it's got quite a restricted range. Many were at feeders in Silverthorne and Telluride.

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – Scattered sightings along the route.

CASSIN'S FINCH (*Haemorhous cassinii*) – Feeders near Telluride provided our best views of these western finches.

RED CROSSBILL (*Loxia curvirostra*) – Great looks of males and females at feeders in Silverthorne.

PINE SISKIN (*Spinus pinus*) – A flock bunched around in the tops of the trees at Genesee Mountain Park.

LESSER GOLDFINCH (*Spinus psaltria*) – Two were outside the Holiday Inn Express in Pueblo during breakfast on our first morning together.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Common only around humans. [H]

MAMMALS

NUTTALL'S (MOUNTAIN) COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus nuttalli*) – These were the cottontails that we found in the mountains of western Colorado.

DESERT COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) – This is the bunny that we saw in dry grasslands on the Great Plains.

BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT (*Lepus californicus*) – Strangely abundant on the outskirts of Garden City, Kansas.

LEAST CHIPMUNK (*Tamias minimus*) – This small chipmunk is widespread in western Colorado.

HOPI CHIPMUNK (*Tamias rufus*) – We saw a few of these chipmunks at Colorado National Monument.

WHITE-TAILED ANTELOPE SQUIRREL (*Ammospermophilus leucurus*) – These tail-lifters were on the rocky slopes of Coal Canyon.

WYOMING GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus elegans*) – This small squirrel is widespread in the northern part of montane Colorado.

ROCK SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus variegatus*) – A few were perched up in trees at Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus lateralis*) – This is the squirrel that looks like a big chipmunk - we saw one at Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

BLACK-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) – Widespread on the eastern plains.

WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys leucurus*) – Common in North Park.

GUNNISON PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) – Great views on the outskirts of Telluride.

RED SQUIRREL (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) – At feeders near Silverthorne.

ORD'S KANGAROO RAT (*Dipodomys ordii*) – One bounced across the sandy track at Bledsoe Cattle Company.

NORTHERN RACCOON (*Procyon lotor*) – A brief sighting of one along the road at night.

BOBCAT (*Lynx rufus*) – Dave spotted one at long range while we were looking for Sharp-tailed Grouse near Steamboat Springs.

ELK (*Cervus canadensis*) – A few in the western part of the state, mostly near Telluride.

MULE DEER (*Odocoileus hemionus*) – Common in western Colorado.

MOOSE (*Alces alces*) – Lots this year - we saw 10 around North Park.

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

BIGHORN SHEEP (*Ovis canadensis*) – These iconic mammals were gathered in small roadside groups during our drives through the mountains.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 157 bird taxa and 21 mammal taxa