



Field Guides Tour Report

Colorado Grouse II 2018

Apr 13, 2018 to Apr 23, 2018

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



Of all the great images that have been shared, this one from participant Donna Pomeroy comes closest to capturing the grandeur of Greater Sage-Grouse displaying.

Our adventure together this spring was memorable in so many ways: tremendous wind, stunning landscapes, abundant large mammals, long days in the van...oh yeah, some awesome birds too! Thanks so much for choosing Field Guides for your Colorado Grouse expedition. Doug and I really enjoyed birding with all of you.

We spend the first few days of the tour out on the eastern plains battling the wind, filling out the checklist and working our way to Kansas to be in position for our first grouse: Lesser Prairie-Chicken. Along the way we picked up noteworthy species like: our only Ross's Goose, Scaled Quail, Clark's Grebe, American White Pelican, Golden Eagle, Black-necked Stilt, Long-billed Curlew, Canyon Towhee, and Yellow-headed Blackbird. All those miles were worth it as we watched an ancient ritual unfold with skirmishing male Lesser Prairie-Chickens doing their best to impress the females. We followed that up with an unforgettably intimate experience at a Greater Prairie-Chicken lek the next morning. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the interesting conversation we had with our host, Bob Bledsoe, the night before. From Wray, we tacked on an obliging Prairie Falcon, some Burrowing Owls, and a mix of Chestnut-collared and McCown's longspurs before turning our attention to the mountains.

Our first attempt at finding White-tailed Ptarmigan at Loveland Pass was foiled by gale-force winds so we moved onto other targets. Our time in Buena Vista produced Clark's Nutcracker, Pinyon Jays and a seemingly frozen Lewis's Woodpecker. The weather was most inhospitable up at Monarch Pass but we managed to come away with American Three-toed Woodpecker and then it was off to the western slope.

The imperiled Gunnison Sage-Grouse was an important species on our itinerary and we saw it well, thankfully. Additions that same day included: Peregrine Falcon, Wilson's Snipe, American Dipper, Evening Grosbeak, and a clean sweep of all four possible taxa of rosy-finches. I often say that Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park is arguably the most unheralded gem of the NPS, and after our visit you can all testify as to why. The up-close-and-personal experiences with Dusky Grouse were amazing and the views of the canyon were awe-inspiring. Later that day we stopped at a few reservoirs and padded our list with some pleasing additions: Long-billed Dowitcher, American Avocet, a surprisingly long view of a Sora, lots of Sandhill Cranes and a Bald Eagle pair at their nest. Our arrival in Fruita was side-tracked briefly by a wildfire, which eventually was suppressed.

A jaunt out toward Utah put us in some prime sagebrush habitat. We quickly picked up a Sagebrush Sparrow, a Sage Thrasher, a Brewer's Sparrow and an unlikely Great Egret in flight. We retreated back to Fruita and explored the northwest section of Colorado National Monument for its sublime landscapes, plus Black-throated Sparrow, Juniper Titmouse, more Pinyon Jays, and a singing Bewick's Wren.

The final chapter of our adventure was spent in the north-central part of Colorado. We had a bit of a wild grouse chase trying to find displaying Sharp-tailed Grouse before landing in Walden. Getting to Walden was punctuated by a roadside American Badger and loads of Rough-legged Hawks and Swainson's Hawks. The reservoir just west of downtown Walden is a waterfowl smorgasbord. We finally connected well with Canvasback, Redhead and Common Goldeneye. Marbled Godwit, lingering Snow Geese and roosting Black-crowned Night-Herons were welcomed additions. Let's not forget mama Moose and her yearling lounging in front of the courthouse. Our evening adventure exceeded all of our expectations with multiple Boreal Owls heard well under a starry sky.

The grand finale of the tour was the incredible show at the Greater Sage-Grouse lek. Those beasts really know how to display. Just when we thought things couldn't get any better, an American Marten crossed our path with a vole in its mouth. Thankfully, it paused long enough for us all to get a view. On our way back to Denver, we scored great looks at Barrow's Goldeneye at Windy Gap Reservoir, Pine Grosbeak and Red Crossbill in Wildernest, and a White-tailed Ptarmigan on our second and final attempt up at Loveland Pass, to the relief of participants and guides alike.

I hope our birding paths cross again someday, sooner rather than later. Take care and have a great summer.

Cheers,

Eric, a.k.a. Eagle

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*) – Twenty-two immature birds were loafing on an island out in Walden Reservoir.

ROSS'S GOOSE (*Anser rossii*) – A drive-by pick up in southeastern Colorado.

CANADA GOOSE (*Branta canadensis*) – An every day species.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Spatula discors*) – Some fine looks at this handsome dabbler.

CINNAMON TEAL (*Spatula cyanoptera*) – More days than not, for one of North America's most outstanding duck species.

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Spatula clypeata*) – About an every other day bird.

GADWALL (*Mareca strepera*) – Good looks in multiple locations.

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Mareca americana*) – Not numerous anywhere, but plenty of good looks.

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – An every day species.

NORTHERN PINTAIL (*Anas acuta*) – Not too many around on this run.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN) (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – Almost an every day species.

CANVASBACK (*Aythya valisineria*) – We didn't catch up to this elegant diver until we reached Walden Reservoir.

REDHEAD (*Aythya americana*) – Our best views for this species were also at Walden Reservoir.

RING-NECKED DUCK (*Aythya collaris*) – Seen daily during the second half of the tour.

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*) – About every other day.

BUFFLEHEAD (*Bucephala albeola*) – Less common than some of the other duck species on this tour.

COMMON GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala clangula*) – Surprisingly, we had a hard time catching up to this species until the end.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE (*Bucephala islandica*) – What a wonderful study at Windy Gap Reservoir, with side-by-side comparisons to Common Goldeneye.

COMMON MERGANSER (*Mergus merganser*) – Great looks at a number of sites during the second half of the tour.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – We caught up to this uncommon migrant in Colorado several times.

RUDDY DUCK (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – Comical looking little rubber duckies.

Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

SCALED QUAIL (*Callipepla squamata*) – The little "cotton top" we found east of Pueblo on our first full day of birding.

Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)

RING-NECKED PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*) – Lots of roadside sightings the first few days out on the plains. [1]

GREATER SAGE-GROUSE (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) – Wow -- what an incredible bird with such an amazing display. Be sure to click on the audio link to hear the swishing of their wings and the bubbly pops from their air sacs.

GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE (*Centrocercus minimus*) – It took some extra effort but we found this imperiled species.

WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN (*Lagopus leucura altipetens*) – Our last new bird of the tour and what a note to end on!

DUSKY GROUSE (*Dendragapus obscurus obscurus*) – Another wow bird. We had our fill and walked away.

SHARP-TAILED GROUSE (*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*) – We saw a roadside bird really well but the show at the lek never materialized for us this run. No doubt the heavy fog impacted our chances.

GREATER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN (PINNATUS) (*Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus*) – We were on stage with these guys. It was unforgettable. Be sure to click on the audio link to hear all their crazy sounds again.

LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) – All those miles were worth it to see this imperiled species.

WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – We observed a displaying tom all puffed out on our first evening.

Podicipedidae (Grebes)

PIED-BILLED GREBE (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Several sightings.

HORNED GREBE (*Podiceps auritus*) – This species is easily missed on this tour, but we found one bird struggling through its molt at Cheraw Lake. It was close enough to notice the white tip to the bill.

EARED GREBE (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – Definitely easier to see in Colorado than the previous species.

WESTERN GREBE (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) – The more widespread Aechmophorus grebe on this tour.

CLARK'S GREBE (*Aechmophorus clarkii*) – We only found them on the reservoirs in the SE part of the state.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – More days than not.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) – Early and late during the tour; it was thrilling to watch them soaring over Walden Reservoir with snow-covered mountains in the background.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*) – Nearly an every day bird.

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – We watched a bird in flight north of Fruita; seemingly out of place in such a dry landscape.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – We scoped several roosting birds on an island out in the middle of Walden Reservoir.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*) – We didn't catch up to this species until we were over on the western slope. Our best looks were probably at Fruitgrowers Reservoir.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*) – Common.

Pandionidae (Osprey)

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*) – Their breeding distribution in Colorado is patchy but can be surprisingly concentrated.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

GOLDEN EAGLE (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – We savored a fine look at a massive (likely female) immature in flight the first afternoon of the tour, then this majestic raptor become a daily occurrence once we were over on the western slope. We even discovered a cliff nest!

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus hudsonius*) – These buoyant gliders drifted over the plains in remarkably high numbers this year.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (*Accipiter striatus*) – Just a couple brief sightings.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*) – We encountered this raptor about every other day.

BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – It took us longer than normal to catch up to this conspicuous raptor, but we eventually saw several occupied nests.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK (*Buteo platypterus*) – Given that we were on the western slope, it was a bit of a shock to see this eastern migrant overhead at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.

SWAINSON'S HAWK (*Buteo swainsoni*) – The concentration of this long-distance migrant south of Walden was very impressive and clearly reflects a large prey base (Wyoming Ground Squirrels) in the area. It was particularly interesting to see the pairs perched together were all mixed morphs: light with a dark or light with an intermediate.

RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – An every day bird showing a wide variety of plumage variations.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK (*Buteo lagopus*) – We saw way more out on the plains in western Kansas and eastern Colorado than I ever remember seeing on this tour before. Another concentration was along the raptor alley southwest of Walden. All those wintering birds likely headed back north to their arctic breeding grounds shortly after our tour.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

VIRGINIA RAIL (*Rallus limicola*) – We heard a number of vocalizations just outside of Rifle but none stepped into view. [*]

SORA (*Porzana carolina*) – What a pleasant surprise to find this bird foraging in the open and even more surprising that it stayed in the open for all of us to enjoy a fine scope view at Sweitzer Lake State Park.

AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*) – The most memorable gathering was the flock scattering off the road at Cheraw Lake.

Gruidae (Cranes)

SANDHILL CRANE (*Antigone canadensis*) – Wonderful looks at Fruitgrowers Reservoir.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Our first encounter was with a small flock in a roadside pond near Holbrook Reservoir in southeast Colorado.

AMERICAN AVOCET (*Recurvirostra americana*) – This elegant shorebird was a treat to study so closely.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*) – A daily occurrence when we weren't in the mountains.

MOUNTAIN PLOVER (*Charadrius montanus*) – This cryptic shorebird has carved out a niche in the most barren of landscapes. We spied several birds just east of Pueblo.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

LONG-BILLED CURLEW (*Numenius americanus*) – We had better than average luck encountering this massive shorebird this year with sightings of migrants on multiple days.

MARbled GODWIT (*Limosa fedoa*) – We caught up to this beauty at Walden Reservoir.
LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – Our only sighting was an individual at Swietzer Lake State Park.
WILSON'S SNIPE (*Gallinago delicata*) – We couldn't have asked for a better look than the bird in the river.
WILSON'S PHALAROPE (*Phalaropus tricolor*) – One of the highlights from our brief stop a tiny Fravert Reservoir.
GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – We found migrants on two occasions.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BONAPARTE'S GULL (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – Just a few sightings.
FRANKLIN'S GULL (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*) – Seeing the pink bellies on some individuals was a real treat.
RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*) – Only during the first half of the tour.
CALIFORNIA GULL (*Larus californicus*) – There is a sizable breeding colony at Walden Reservoir.
HERRING GULL (*Larus argentatus*) – We didn't give this species much attention at Henry Lake because of the excitement over the following species.
LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus fuscus*) – We were pleasantly surprised to notice an adult in the high winds at Henry Lake.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) – Of course. [I]
EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – This non-native is now abundant across the state, except at the highest elevations.
MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*) – Plenty.

Strigidae (Owls)

GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*) – The bird on the nest near the Greater Prairie-Chicken lek stared back at us intently.
NORTHERN PYGMY-OWL (ROCKY MTS.) (*Glaucidium gnoma pinicola*) – Heard briefly while we were focused on finding a displaying Dusky Grouse in Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. [*]
BURROWING OWL (*Athene cucularia*) – We saw a pair standing and flying around presumably their nest burrow near Arriba. This species was surprisingly inconspicuous this year, perhaps because of the high winds.
BOREAL OWL (*Aegolius funereus*) – For those that were willing to burn the candle at both ends, it was well worth it. We heard several birds well -- giving classic series of hoots as well as a variety of calls during a magical night. [*]

Apodidae (Swifts)

WHITE-THROATED SWIFT (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) – Trying to track these rockets as they whizzed by us at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park was equal parts thrilling and dizzying.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle alcyon*) – Finally caught up to one shortly after seeing the American Marten on our last day.

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

LEWIS'S WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes lewis*) – We enjoyed a nearly motionless individual in Buena Vista.
HAIRY WOODPECKER (ROCKY MTS.) (*Picoides villosus orius*) – We came upon this species while searching for the next one.
AMERICAN THREE-TOED WOODPECKER (ROCKY MTS.) (*Picoides dorsalis dorsalis*) – The weather was working against us but we managed to spot a pair up at Monarch Pass.
NORTHERN FLICKER (YELLOW-SHAFTED) (*Colaptes auratus auratus*) – We saw this subspecies at the western edge of its range.
NORTHERN FLICKER (RED-SHAFTED) (*Colaptes auratus cafer*) – We had way more encounters with this rosy subspecies.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – Unlike other parts of this species' range, their numbers remain strong in Colorado.
PEREGRINE FALCON (*Falco peregrinus*) – We enjoyed good scope views of a perched adult after it winged by our vans.
PRAIRIE FALCON (*Falco mexicanus*) – The setting wasn't sublime but the views we had of the individual in Burlington couldn't be beat.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

DUSKY FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax oberholseri*) – This newly arrived migrant was actively foraging in the shrubs off the parking lot for the visitor center in Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.
EASTERN PHOEBE (*Sayornis phoebe*) – We found one in a sheltered copse of trees out on the eastern plains.
SAY'S PHOEBE (*Sayornis saya*) – Good looks more days than not.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – Plenty of sightings during the first half of the tour.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

GRAY JAY (ROCKY MTS.) (*Perisoreus canadensis capitalis*) – We found this hardy species up at Monarch Pass.
PINYON JAY (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*) – It can be tricky catching up to this nomadic species but they practically came to us in Buena Vista.
STELLER'S JAY (INTERIOR) (*Cyanocitta stelleri maculophya*) – They sport such a fetching combination of gray and blue.
BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – Just a couple brief sightings in southeastern Colorado for a few members of our group.
WOODHOUSE'S SCRUB-JAY (*Aphelocoma woodhouseii*) – This fairly recent split was seen well on the western slope.
BLACK-BILLED MAGPIE (*Pica hudsonia*) – These guys show a lot of character.
CLARK'S NUTCRACKER (*Nucifraga columbiana*) – The perched individual in Buena Vista turned out to be the only one we encountered the whole tour.
AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – Every day.
COMMON RAVEN (*Corvus corax*) – Every day except our detour to Kansas.

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*) – Numerous.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Plenty.

VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – We almost finished the tour without one until we spied an individual swirling above the strip mall in Silverthorne.

BANK SWALLOW (*Riparia riparia*) – A few were wheeling over the lake in the municipal park in Colorado Springs.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*) – The most frequently encountered swallow species of the tour.

CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – Just a few early on.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE (*Poecile atricapillus*) – Only ran into this widespread species on one day.

MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE (*Poecile gambeli*) – We found a few almost daily during the latter half of the tour.

JUNIPER TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*) – We found a few uncooperative birds in Colorado National Monument.

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits)

BUSHTIT (INTERIOR) (*Psaltriparus minimus plumbeus*) – These sprites were seen on several occasions.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH (INTERIOR WEST) (*Sitta carolinensis nelsoni*) – We finally caught up to this potential split on the last day at Genesee Park.

PYGMY NUTHATCH (*Sitta pygmaea*) – A good showing in Buena Vista --uncharacteristically low.

Certhiidae (Treecreepers)

BROWN CREEPER (*Certhia americana*) – This is another species we caught up to in Genesee Park.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

ROCK WREN (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) – I don't think any of us expected to find that individual along the country road out on the plains.

MARSH WREN (PLESIUS GROUP) (*Cistothorus palustris plesius*) – The cattails at Sweitzer Lake State Park were loaded with singers.

BEWICK'S WREN (MEXICANUS GROUP) (*Thryomanes bewickii eremophilus*) – What a lovely song from this long-tailed wren. We came upon a teed up bird in Colorado National Monument.

Cinclidae (Dippers)

AMERICAN DIPPER (*Cinclus mexicanus*) – This has to be one of the coolest birds in North America and we enjoyed front row seats to their performance in the river.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (*Regulus calendula*) – On just a few occasions.

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

EASTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia sialis*) – We caught up to a bright male in the copse of trees out on the plains as we returned from Kansas.

WESTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia mexicana*) – It was a treat to compare this species to Mountain Bluebird side-by-side.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia currucoides*) – The most widespread bluebird species in Colorado.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE (*Myadestes townsendi*) – Peter did a great job of spotting our first at a scenic overlook.

AMERICAN ROBIN (*Turdus migratorius*) – Plenty throughout.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

SAGE THRASHER (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) – Seen well north of Grand Junction.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Every day. [I]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

AMERICAN PIPIT (*Anthus rubescens*) – We picked up just one along the back edge of a small impoundment at Bledsoe's Ranch.

Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)

CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR (*Calcarius ornatus*) – We enjoyed good scope views south of Arriba in a millet field.

MCCOWN'S LONGSPUR (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*) – This species seemed to be much less numerous at the Arriba site but we eventually caught to a sharp individual.

Passerellidae (New World Buntings and Sparrows)

CHIPPING SPARROW (*Spizella passerina*) – A few here and there.

BREWER'S SPARROW (*Spizella breweri*) – We enjoyed a cooperative bird in the Mack area.

BLACK-THROATED SPARROW (*Amphispiza bilineata*) – We couldn't have asked for a better look at this handsome sparrow.

LARK SPARROW (*Chondestes grammacus*) – Some of us saw this bold sparrow well.

FOX SPARROW (SLATE-COLORED) (*Passerella iliaca schistacea*) – We had an excellent look at a very responsive individual of this distinctive subspecies.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (SLATE-COLORED) (*Junco hyemalis hyemalis*) – Just a few in the beginning of the tour.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (OREGON) (*Junco hyemalis oregonus*) – We caught up to a few of this subspecies but most had already migrated back north.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (PINK-SIDED) (*Junco hyemalis mearnsi*) – A few times during the second half of the tour.

DARK-EYED JUNCO (GRAY-HEADED) (*Junco hyemalis caniceps*) – This subspecies breeds in Colorado and is easily seen in the mountainous regions.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (ORIANTHA) (*Zonotrichia leucophrys oriantha*) – This dark-lored subspecies is a breeder in the mountains of Colorado.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S) (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – This migrant subspecies was seen more often than others.

SAGEBRUSH SPARROW (*Artemisiospiza nevadensis*) – We made a special effort to find this handsome sparrow and it was well worth it.

VESPER SPARROW (*Poocetes gramineus*) – Seen in good numbers in several areas.

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – We only caught up to this species on one day of the tour.

SONG SPARROW (*Melospiza melodia*) – Quite a few along the way.

LINCOLN'S SPARROW (*Melospiza lincolni*) – One newly arrived migrant was spotted in a riverside thicket.

CANYON TOWHEE (*Melospiza fusca*) – A pair foraged around a small corral our first morning in the field.

SPOTTED TOWHEE (*Pipilo maculatus*) – We saw these well on several days on the western slope.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) – These handsome Icterids were not as numerous as I am used to seeing during this tour.

WESTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella neglecta*) – One of the few every day birds.

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*) – Thanks to our extended pursuit of Lesser Prairie-Chicken, we drifted far enough east to hear their beautiful but less complicated song, compared to the previous species.

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – Also an every day bird.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*) – Just early on during the tour.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) – We came across a large flock on our way back from Kansas.

COMMON GRACKLE (BRONZED) (*Quiscalus quiscula versicolor*) – Mostly seen during the first half of the tour.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – Seen well in southeast Colorado and the Kansas portion of our itinerary.

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

EVENING GROSBEAK (*Coccothraustes vespertinus brooksi*) – That striking male gave us a good look.

PINE GROSBEAK (*Pinicola enucleator montana*) – We finally caught up to this species on our way back to Denver.

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH (HEPBURN'S) (*Leucosticte tephrocotis littoralis*) – This is the subspecies with the distinct gray hood, which breeds in the Pacific NW.

GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH (GRAY-CROWNED) (*Leucosticte tephrocotis tephrocotis*) – This is the widespread interior mountains subspecies.

BLACK ROSY-FINCH (*Leucosticte atrata*) – This gorgeous Rosy-Finch is the most distinctive.

BROWN-CAPPED ROSY-FINCH (*Leucosticte australis*) – This species is almost a Colorado endemic.

HOUSE FINCH (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – More days than not.

CASSIN'S FINCH (*Haemorhous cassinii*) – Good looks at feeders.

RED CROSSBILL (*Loxia curvirostra*) – What a treat to watch a vibrant male sing in the open.

PINE SISKIN (*Spinus pinus*) – Only a few encounters.

LESSER GOLDFINCH (*Spinus psaltria*) – Just one day.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) – Every day. [1]

MAMMALS

VIRGINIA OPOSSUM (*Didelphis virginianus*) – Some people in the lead van watched one in the headlights waddle across the road predawn on our way out to the Greater Prairie-Chicken lek.

PIKA (*Ochotona princeps*) – A few people heard one calling up at Loveland Pass.

NUTTALL'S (MOUNTAIN) COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus nuttalli*) – This species is typically found above 7,000 feet.

DESERT COTTONTAIL (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) – This is the widespread species we saw most often in the east. The best looks were at our hotel near Denver airport.

WHITE-TAILED JACKRABBIT (*Lepus townsendi*) – We saw a few in North Park.

BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT (*Lepus californicus*) – The concentration on the approach to the hotel in Garden City, Kansas was comical.

LEAST CHIPMUNK (*Tamias minimus*) – Tiny, super long-tailed and quite common.

HOPI CHIPMUNK (*Tamias rufus*) – We saw this species well in the parking lot outside the VC in Colorado National Monument.

WYOMING GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus elegans*) – They were most conspicuous in North Park.

THIRTEEN-LINED GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*) – We spotted these guys en route to the longspur spot.

ROCK SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus variegatus*) – We saw a fair number of these in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.

GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRREL (*Spermophilus lateralis*) – These guys look like giant chipmunks.

BLACK-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) – Only east of the Rockies.

WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys leucurus*) – Widespread on the western slope and many in North Park.

GUNNISON PRAIRIE DOG (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) – The most range-restricted prairie-dog that we encountered.

MUSKRAT (*Ondatra zibethica*) – We saw a couple near the end of the tour.

RED FOX (*Vulpes vulpes*) – Only one time.

COYOTE (*Canis latrans*) – Despite persecution, this adaptable predator thrives throughout the state.

AMERICAN MARTEN (*Martes americana*) – This was another thrilling and most-unexpected sighting! We watched this rufous weasel dash across the road, briefly climb a tree, then gobble down its vole meal in just a few bites before loping off.

AMERICAN BADGER (*Taxidea taxus*) – Jean can testify as to how excited I was to spot this impressive weasel. Thankfully it gave most of us a view after we got turned around.

ELK (*Cervus canadensis*) – An iconic species of the region.

MULE DEER (*Odocoileus hemionus*) – We saw plenty once we said goodbye to the eastern plains.

WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – Only in the east.

MOOSE (*Alces alces*) – The cow with her yearling in downtown Walden were so unperturbed that it they seemed like town pets.

PRONGHORN (*Antilocapra americana*) – This elegant beasts were a frequent sighting.

BIGHORN SHEEP (*Ovis canadensis*) – That little lamb in Colorado National Monument was particularly cute.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 169 bird taxa and 26 mammal taxa