



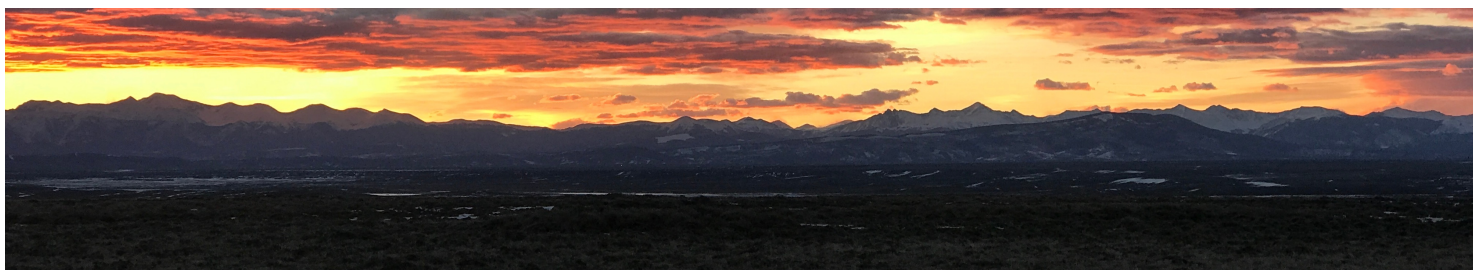
*Field Guides Tour Report*

**COLORADO GROUSE | 2019**

Apr 6, 2019 to Apr 16, 2019

Tom Johnson & Ned Brinkley

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



*Colorado is full of incredible vistas, but this fiery sunrise in North Park on our final full day of birding together was particularly special. A spread of booming and dancing Greater Sage-Grouse helped to complete this panorama. Photo by guide Tom Johnson.*

This spring found us back in Colorado in pursuit of the most uniquely North American birds of all: the lekking grouse of the Great Plains and American West. We had a wonderful time finding the five species of lekking grouse (Greater & Lesser prairie-chickens, Sharp-tailed Grouse, and Gunnison & Greater sage-grouse), plenty of other fancy chickens (Dusky Grouse, Scaled Quail, and Wild Turkey come to mind), lots of non-chicken birds (all 3 rosy-finches, Pinyon Jays, Juniper Titmouse, Sagebrush Sparrow, Mountain Plovers) and an incredibly varied landscape as we inscribed a gigantic figure-8 in the middle of the continent with the wheels of our vans.

A few featured highlights of our tour will follow, but for details on each species, please read down through the annotated list below.

One new feature of this year's tour was a change in venue for viewing Lesser Prairie-Chickens. We gained access to a private ranch in western Kansas and set up in blinds on two adjacent leks. One lek had ~50 Lesser Prairie-Chickens in attendance, while the other had a smaller number of Lessers but a mix that included several Greaters and two hybrids as well! We look forward to returning to this gem of a site in future years.

Another fine memory of the tour was our visit to the Hynes residence near Telluride. Eric (AKA Field Guides leader Golden Eagle) and Christine Hynes invited us over and we enjoyed the spectacle of hundreds of rosy-finches that included over 20 Black Rosy-finches. We surrounded the feeding station, and the Hynes daughters Molly and Rita helped Eric serve seed to the huge flock of finches. It was really special to share this intimate bird frenzy with part of the wonderful Field Guides family.

Even though we had to contend with a few snowstorms along the way, the group worked together very well and we'd like to thank you for doing your part to make this an enjoyable experience. Additional thanks go to our tour manager Sharon Mackie for her support from Austin, and to co-leader Ned Brinkley for his wisdom and humor along the way.

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)

**ROSS'S GOOSE** (*Anser rossii*) – We saw distant flocks of these small, white geese at Verhoeff Reservoir and Neenoshe Reservoir on the Plains.

**CAKCLING GOOSE** (*Branta hutchinsii*) – One was at the Valente Open Space near Denver on our first afternoon together; later, we saw 10 in a town park in Fort Morgan, CO. These were birds that we judged to be good and proper Cackling Geese instead of the odd, small Canada types that plague the region.

**CANADA GOOSE** (*Branta canadensis*) – Widespread.

**WOOD DUCK** (*Aix sponsa*) – A single drake made an unexpected flyby at Neenoshe Reservoir.

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL** (*Spatula discors*) – These small ducks were at Lake Meredith and again at Windy Gap Reservoir.

**CINNAMON TEAL** (*Spatula cyanoptera*) – Scattered sightings in wetlands around the state.

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Spatula clypeata*) – Common and widespread.

**GADWALL** (*Mareca strepera*) – Common and widespread.

**AMERICAN WIGEON** (*Mareca americana*) – Fairly widespread.

**MALLARD** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Common and widespread.

**MEXICAN DUCK** (*Anas diazi*) – Two males were a rare find on the flats at Windy Gap Reservoir on our final day. This species was recently split from Mallard and resembles a dark brown version of that species (with the male lacking the green head & ornamentation of a male "Northern" Mallard). Though hybridization has clouded identification a bit, these individuals appear to represent typical Mexican Ducks. The species is rare in Colorado, with most records from the reservoirs outside the mountains in the Great Plains/ Front Range area.

**NORTHERN PINTAIL** (*Anas acuta*) – We saw a few pairs and trios in wetlands in the western part of Colorado.

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

**CANVASBACK** (*Aythya valisineria*) – We saw singles at a few locations before arriving at Walden Reservoir and finding about 15 birds there.

**REDHEAD** (*Aythya americana*) – Repeated sightings of this fancy diving duck, including 15 at Windy Gap Reservoir and 30 at Walden Reservoir.

**RING-NECKED DUCK** (*Aythya collaris*) – Fairly common at a few lakes on our route, including an impressive 60 at Windy Gap Reservoir.

**LESSER SCAUP** (*Aythya affinis*) – Quite common and widespread on lakes.

**BUFFLEHEAD** (*Bucephala albeola*) – Small numbers on a few occasions on larger ponds and lakes.

**COMMON GOLDENEYE** (*Bucephala clangula*) – A few were at Valente Open Space and Walden Reservoir, and then we saw at least 50 at Windy Gap Reservoir.

**BARROW'S GOLDENEYE** (*Bucephala islandica*) – An impressive 30 of these fancy ducks (highly local in spring in Colorado) were mixed in with scores of other waterfowl at Windy Gap Reservoir.

**HOODED MERGANSER** (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) – One was at the Valente Open Space near Denver.

**COMMON MERGANSER** (*Mergus merganser*) – Common and widespread.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** (*Mergus serrator*) – Scarce migrants; we saw 8 on Fruitgrowers Reservoir and another 6 on Sweitzer Lake.

**RUDDY DUCK** (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) – Hundreds were at the Valente Open Space and Lake Meredith, and smaller numbers were at other lakes along the way.

#### Odontophoridae (New World Quail)

**SCALED QUAIL** (*Callipepla squamata*) – A pair were along a dirt track through grasslands near Neenoshe Reservoir.

**GAMBEL'S QUAIL** (*Callipepla gambelii*) – Six of these beautiful quail were in a desert neighborhood outside of Grand Junction.

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

**RING-NECKED PHEASANT** (*Phasianus colchicus*) – We saw a few in the plains of Kansas and eastern Colorado. [I]

**GREATER SAGE-GROUSE** (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) – On our first afternoon in North Park, we found five of these massive grouse walking through the sage flats near Coalmont. The next morning, we enjoyed a spectacular lek display of about 60 birds, a combination of dancing males and prospecting females. Every time I see the flared, spikey tails of displaying male Greater Sage-Grouse, I can't help but feel there isn't a single bird more emblematic of the West than this.

**GUNNISON SAGE-GROUSE** (*Centrocercus minimus*) – Heavy snow and ice threatened our chances at finding this rare and localized grouse, so we were pleased to watch a male dancing and resting on the snow. Excellent views through our scopes.

**DUSKY GROUSE** (*Dendragapus obscurus obscurus*) – Two males displayed and hooted along the side of a road through Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.

**SHARP-TAILED GROUSE** (*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*) – We found ten of these lovely, silver-brown grouse in the hills near Steamboat Springs. Initial views included birds in flight and perched up in treetops, but after a bit of time, several males assembled and began their wing-splayed dance right in front of us.

**GREATER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN (PINNATUS)** (*Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus*) – About 35 birds surrounded us with their booming, cackling, and screaming as we watched the dance from just a few yards away in the sandhills of the Bledsoe ranch. We also got to compare Greater and Lessers on a lek in western Kansas.

**LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN** (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*) – For the first time, we visited a private ranch in western Kansas to see Lesser Prairie-chickens up close on their leks. We had great success, with ~50 Lessers showing up to one lek and a smaller number showing up to a mixed lek that also featured a few Greater Prairie-chickens and hybrids. What a show!

**WILD TURKEY** (*Meleagris gallopavo*) – Scattered sightings at several places across Colorado, plus a nice pre-dawn "gobble chorus" in the grasslands of western Kansas.

#### Podicipedidae (Grebes)

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – Ned scoped one in the distance at Verhoeff Reservoir.

**HORNED GREBE** (*Podiceps auritus*) – About eight were at the Valente Open Space on our first afternoon together.

**EARED GREBE** (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – Four were in lovely breeding plumage on Holbrook Reservoir.

**WESTERN GREBE** (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) – These big grebes were on a few large reservoirs on the eastern plains as well as at Windy Gap Reservoir in the mountains.

**CLARK'S GREBE** (*Aechmophorus clarkii*) – Excellent studies (and comparisons with Western Grebes) at Lake Meredith and Neenoshe Reservoir.

#### Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Common around larger towns and cities. [I]

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Common around humans. [I]

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaidura macroura*) – Widespread, but much less common on the tour than Eurasian Collared-Dove.

#### Apodidae (Swifts)

**WHITE-THROATED SWIFT** (*Aeronautes saxatalis*) – These "aeronauts" were circling low to the ground at Colorado National Monument and alongside I-70 near Fruita. It's really enjoyable to get good views of swifts - it doesn't happen very often!

#### Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

**BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD** (*Archilochus alexandri*) – A recently arrived male buzzed by a few of us while we were searching for that Gray Flycatcher at Colorado National Monument. [\*]

*Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)*

**AMERICAN COOT** (*Fulica americana*) – Common and fairly widespread.

*Gruidae (Cranes)*

**SANDHILL CRANE** (*Antigone canadensis*) – These big beauties were in riverine agricultural areas and grasslands between Craig and Steamboat Springs.

*Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)*

**BLACK-NECKED STILT** (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – Three were at Holbrook Reservoir, and then we saw a few singles in western Colorado as well.

**AMERICAN AVOCET** (*Recurvirostra americana*) – Nine were at Holbrook Reservoir on the plains, and we also saw a few scattered migrants in western Colorado.

*Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)*

**KILLDEER** (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Widespread in open habitats.

**MOUNTAIN PLOVER** (*Charadrius montanus*) – A pair of these "Prairie Plovers" (they're really not into mountains!) showed well in a prairie dog town in the Pawnee National Grassland in northeastern Colorado.

*Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)*

**LONG-BILLED CURLEW** (*Numenius americanus*) – We saw a few pairs of these distinctive shorebirds in the plains and also in North Park.

**MARbled GODWIT** (*Limosa fedoa*) – Four were in the marsh at Fruitgrowers Reservoir.

**WILSON'S SNIPE** (*Gallinago delicata*) – One was calling in the predawn gloaming outside our hotel in Steamboat Springs. [\*]

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – We found a few of these big yellowlegs during their spring migration through the plains and also in western Colorado.

*Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)*

**BONAPARTE'S GULL** (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – Migrants were at Lake Meredith, Holbrook Reservoir, and Fruitgrowers Reservoir.

**FRANKLIN'S GULL** (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*) – Two of these striking migrant gulls were at Neenoshe Reservoir.

**RING-BILLED GULL** (*Larus delawarensis*) – Fairly common on many lakes that we visited during the tour.

**CALIFORNIA GULL** (*Larus californicus*) – These handsome, breeding gulls were gathered on icy Walden Reservoir.

*Gaviidae (Loons)*

**RED-THROATED LOON** (*Gavia stellata*) – This mid-continent rarity was at the Valente Open Space near Denver on the opening afternoon of the tour.

*Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)*

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – This was the only cormorant that we encountered during our journey.

*Pelecanidae (Pelicans)*

**AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) – These huge waterbirds were on several lakes we visited, both on the plains and on the Colorado Plateau.

*Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)*

**GREAT BLUE HERON** (*Ardea herodias*) – Common and fairly widespread.

*Cathartidae (New World Vultures)*

**TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*) – Common throughout our journey.

*Pandionidae (Osprey)*

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – These familiar fish hawks were seen several times over lakes and rivers in western Colorado.

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)*

**GOLDEN EAGLE** (*Aquila chrysaetos*) – We found these huge raptors to be almost common, especially in western Colorado, with sightings of 17 individuals. One effectively ended the morning watch at a Lesser Prairie-Chicken lek in Colorado when it blasted past, sending the chickens to all points on the compass.

**NORTHERN HARRIER** (*Circus hudsonius*) – Repeated sightings in the grasslands of the eastern plains.

**COOPER'S HAWK** (*Accipiter cooperii*) – We saw a few of this widespread *Accipiter* during our time in western Colorado.

**BALD EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – Common, especially along lakes and rivers in western Colorado.

**SWAINSON'S HAWK** (*Buteo swainsoni*) – Our only sighting of this long-winged *Buteo* was in the Pawnee National Grassland. [N]

**RED-TAILED HAWK** (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Common and widespread.

**ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK** (*Buteo lagopus*) – At least 3 were in the pastures of North Park on our final full day of birding together.

**FERRUGINOUS HAWK** (*Buteo regalis*) – One of these huge hawks circled overhead as we watched from the roadside east of Pawnee National Grassland.

*Strigidae (Owls)*

**GREAT HORNED OWL** (*Bubo virginianus*) – We saw one adult sitting on a nest in a broken tree snag at the Bledsoe Cattle Company.

**BURROWING OWL** (*Athene cunicularia*) – A few of these lovely, colonial owls were clustered in various spots on the eastern plains.

*Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)*

**BELTED KINGFISHER** (*Megasceryle alcyon*) – Along rivers near Telluride and Rifle.

*Picidae (Woodpeckers)*



**RED-NAPED SAPSUCKER** (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*) – A migrant flew past us while we were watching Pinyon Jays near Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

**DOWNY WOODPECKER** (*Dryobates pubescens*) – These small, familiar woodpeckers were at the Wray Fish Hatchery and also in Silverthorne.

**LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER** (*Dryobates scalaris*) – One was exploring a patch of low cholla cactus on the IL Road east of Pueblo.

**HAIRY WOODPECKER** (*Dryobates villosus*) – One was in the big cottonwood trees at the Wray Fish Hatchery.

**NORTHERN FLICKER (RED-SHAFTED)** (*Colaptes auratus cafer*) – Common and widespread.

*Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)*

**AMERICAN KESTREL** (*Falco sparverius*) – Widespread in open habitats.

**MERLIN** (*Falco columbarius*) – One flew over us as we watched a flock of rosy-finches in Silverthorne.

**PRAIRIE FALCON** (*Falco mexicanus*) – We found these sandy brown falcons north of Rifle, and again near Craig.

*Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)*

**GRAY FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax wrightii*) – This recently arrived migrant *Empidonax* was tail-dipping in the pinyon juniper woodlands near the visitor center at Colorado National Monument.

**SAY'S PHOEBE** (*Sayornis saya*) – We found these open-land flycatchers along the edge of Neenoshe and Walden reservoirs.

*Laniidae (Shrikes)*

**LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE** (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – We found these shrikes a few times at the Pawnee National Grassland, near Mack, and at Walden Reservoir.

*Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)*

**PINYON JAY** (*Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus*) – About a dozen flew past us and perched up in some bare trees just outside of Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. These fine gray-blue jays make one of my favorite calls of any North American bird.

**STELLER'S JAY (INTERIOR)** (*Cyanocitta stelleri macrolopha*) – We enjoyed several sightings of these big, crested jays while in the mountains.

**BLUE JAY** (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – One made a brief flyby at Holbrook Reservoir.

**WOODHOUSE'S SCRUB-JAY** (*Aphelocoma woodhouseii*) – Our best sightings of this interior scrub-jay were in the scrubby forest near Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park.

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

**CLARK'S NUTCRACKER** (*Nucifraga columbiana*) – Two sightings of this montane corvid at Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

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

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

*Alaudidae (Larks)*

**HORNED LARK** (*Eremophila alpestris*) – Particularly common on the plains of eastern Colorado and Kansas.

*Hirundinidae (Swallows)*

**NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW** (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – Two were with the big swallow flock at Sweitzer Lake.

**TREE SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – About 130 were in the big swallow flock at Sweitzer Lake, and we had a few elsewhere as well.

**VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta thalassina*) – About 60 were with five other species of swallows at Sweitzer Lake.

**BANK SWALLOW** (*Riparia riparia*) – At least five were in the Sweitzer Lake swallow flock.

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) – Just a few sightings in the area around Delta.

**CLIFF SWALLOW** (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) – One was with other swallows at Sweitzer Lake.

*Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)*

**BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE** (*Poecile atricapillus*) – Our best views were in comparison to Mountain Chickadee at the Moose Visitor Center feeders.

**MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE** (*Poecile gambeli*) – Great views at the Hynes feeders in Telluride and in comparison with Black-capped Chickadees at the Moose Visitor Center.

**JUNIPER TITMOUSE** (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*) – These plain gray titmice were in pinyon-juniper habitat at Black Canyon of the Gunnison as well as at Colorado National Monument.

*Sittidae (Nuthatches)*

**RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH** (*Sitta canadensis*) – Surprisingly, our only sighting was at the Wray Fish Hatchery.

**WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH** (*Sitta carolinensis*) – We found one in tall cottonwoods between Colorado Springs and Pueblo.

**PYGMY NUTHATCH** (*Sitta pygmaea*) – Two were with other songbirds near feeders in Silverthorne.

*Troglodytidae (Wrens)*

**ROCK WREN** (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) – A migrant was along a fenceline at the Bledsoe Cattle Company; another was in more typical, rocky habitat at Coal Canyon.

**CANYON WREN** (*Catherpes mexicanus*) – We heard one of these memorable wrens singing from the cliffs at Colorado National Monument. [\*]

**MARSH WREN (PLESIUS GROUP)** (*Cistothorus palustris plesius*) – Two were singing from the waterside marsh at Fravert Reservoir. [\*]

*Cinclidae (Dippers)*

**AMERICAN DIPPER** (*Cinclus mexicanus*) – We saw a few of these plump songbirds in rushing streams in the vicinity of Telluride (including right in the middle of the snowy downtown).

*Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)*

**WESTERN BLUEBIRD** (*Sialia mexicana*) – A pair were perched up on treetops and wires along the border of Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP.

**MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD** (*Sialia currucoides*) – Many scattered sightings in the western, montane part of Colorado.

**TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE** (*Myadestes townsendi*) – We had a quick flyby look at one at Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

**AMERICAN ROBIN** (*Turdus migratorius*) – Common and widespread.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

**CURVE-BILLED THRASHER (CURVIROSTRE GROUP)** (*Toxostoma curvirostre oberholseri*) – A pair interacted and one bird sang in desert scrub east of Pueblo.

**SAGE THRASHER** (*Oreoscoptes montanus*) – We saw at least four of these small, streaky thrashers in the same area that held Curve-billed Thrashers near Pueblo; another one was singing at the Greater Sage-Grouse lek in North Park.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

**EUROPEAN STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Common near towns. [I]

Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)

**EVENING GROSBEEK** (*Coccothraustes vespertinus brooksi*) – We found these fine finches in Telluride and also at Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP.

**PINE GROSBEEK (ROCKY MTS.)** (*Pinicola enucleator montana*) – Two were in the treetops of Silverthorne, and another two were along the South Rim of Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

**GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH (HEPBURN'S)** (*Leucosticte tephrocotis littoralis*) – Two were mixed in with the big rosy-finch flock at the Hynes residence in Telluride. Hepburn's is the coastal subspecies with the pale gray cheeks.

**GRAY-CROWNED ROSY-FINCH (GRAY-CROWNED)** (*Leucosticte tephrocotis tephrocotis*) – These "interior west" Gray-crowned Rosies were greatly outnumbered by Brown-capped Rosy-finches, but we still managed to pick them out both in Silverthorne (1) and in Telluride (2).

**BLACK ROSY-FINCH** (*Leucosticte atrata*) – We were overwhelmed by the fabulous views of these localized beauties - over 20 individuals visited the Hynes feeders in Telluride during our visit. This was a highlight for many members of the group, understandably!

**BROWN-CAPPED ROSY-FINCH** (*Leucosticte australis*) – The common Colorado rosy-finch - We saw ~150 in Silverthorne and ~350 at the Hynes feeders in Telluride. A snowstorm of finches!

**HOUSE FINCH** (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – Regular sightings in western Colorado.

**CASSIN'S FINCH** (*Haemorhous cassinii*) – Our best views of this western finch came at Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP.

**RED CROSSBILL** (*Loxia curvirostra*) – We heard one calling "kip kip kip" as it flew over at Silverthorne. [\*]

**PINE SISKIN** (*Spinus pinus*) – Great up-close views on the Hynes feeders in Telluride.

**AMERICAN GOLDFINCH** (*Spinus tristis*) – At least one flew past us, calling, at our hotel in Steamboat Springs.

Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)

**CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR** (*Calcarius ornatus*) – A migrant flock of ~70 jumped up from the corn stubble at the Bledsoe Cattle Company, offering a great listen and good flight views. We also found singing birds along the fencelines at Pawnee National Grassland - these posed for some great scope views.

**MCCOWN'S LONGSPUR** (*Rhynchophanes mccownii*) – At least 10 were along a lonely stretch of road at the Pawnee National Grassland, mixed with Chestnut-collared Longspur for nice comparisons.

Passerellidae (New World Sparrows)

**GRASSHOPPER SPARROW** (*Ammodramus savannarum*) – One sang a few times at Bledsoe Cattle Company during our Greater Prairie-chicken watch. [\*]

**CHIPPING SPARROW** (*Spizella passerina*) – A migrant joined some singing Brewer's Sparrows for a nice comparison view in the sage flats west of Grand Junction.

**BREWER'S SPARROW** (*Spizella breweri*) – A few singing birds perched up and showed off their super-understated plumaged near the Utah border.

**BLACK-THROATED SPARROW** (*Amphispiza bilineata*) – Superb views on the outskirts of Colorado National Monument.

**DARK-EYED JUNCO (PINK-SIDED)** (*Junco hyemalis mearnsi*) – We saw a few migrants in the mountain west.

**DARK-EYED JUNCO (GRAY-HEADED)** (*Junco hyemalis caniceps*) – This is the widespread breeding junco of western Colorado, and we saw it many times.

**WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (GAMBEL'S)** (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) – We saw big flocks along roadsides on the eastern plains.

**SAGEBRUSH SPARROW** (*Artemisiospiza nevadensis*) – We made an excursion to the sage flats near the Utah border (west of Grand Junction) to find this lovely denizen of the Great Basin. This was a big target species for a few members of our group, and we saw it well.

**SONG SPARROW** (*Melospiza melodia*) – Widespread in riparian areas, even including the snowy stream corridor in downtown Telluride.

**CANYON TOWHEE** (*Melospiza fusca*) – These big sparrows were in desert habitat along the IL Road near Pueblo.

**SPOTTED TOWHEE** (*Pipilo maculatus*) – Good views in western Colorado, including in the forest at Black Canyon of the Gunnison.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

**YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** (*Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*) – Several treetops were full of bright males near Lake Meredith.

**WESTERN MEADOWLARK** (*Sturnella neglecta*) – Abundant in many open habitats, especially the Plains.

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

**BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD** (*Molothrus ater*) – Mixed in with other blackbirds on the Plains.

**BREWER'S BLACKBIRD** (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*) – One was with a flock of robins that flew over us in Silverthorne - unusual here!

**COMMON GRACKLE (BRONZED)** (*Quiscalus quiscula versicolor*) – Common on the Plains.

**GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – We saw plenty of these big blackbirds on the Plains.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Common in towns and cities. [II]

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## MAMMALS

**DESERT COTTONTAIL** (*Sylvilagus audubonii*) – These were the only small bunnies we found on the trip this year.

**WHITE-TAILED JACKRABBIT** (*Lepus townsendi*) – One crossed the road in front of us in North Park.

**BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT** (*Lepus californicus*) – We saw a few of these impressive critters on the plains of eastern Colorado and Kansas.

**YELLOW-BELLIED MARMOT** (*Marmota flaviventris*) – A few roadside animals posed for us between Craig and Steamboat Springs.

**WHITE-TAILED ANTELOPE SQUIRREL** (*Ammospermophilus leucurus*) – Several scrambled over the rocks of Coal Canyon with their tails up over their backs.

**WYOMING GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Uroditellus elegans*) – The common small brown squirrel of the openlands of western Colorado.

**THIRTEEN-LINED GROUND SQUIRREL** (*Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*) – A few were roadside near the Pawnee National Grassland.

**ROCK SQUIRREL** (*Spermophilus variegatus*) – Just a couple of well-spaced sightings, including a few in a ranch yard near Lake Meredith.

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

**WHITE-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG** (*Cynomys leucurus*) – These were the prairie-dogs we saw in North Park.

**GUNNISON PRAIRIE DOG** (*Cynomys gunnisoni*) – A few quick looks in the Telluride area - most of the towns of this species that we passed were still covered in snow!

**FOX SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus niger*) – Good views at the Wray Fish Hatchery.

**RED SQUIRREL** (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) – One scampered around near the birdfeeders at Silverthorne.

**ORD'S KANGAROO RAT** (*Dipodomys ordii*) – One bounced across in front of us as we drove out to the Greater Prairie-Chicken lek at the Bledsoe Cattle Company, but only a few of us glimpsed it.

**MUSKRAT** (*Ondatra zibethica*) – Michael spotted one in a lake during our drive to Steamboat Springs.

**RED FOX** (*Vulpes vulpes*) – Two individuals were spotted during our time in the western mountains - the one just outside of Black Canyon of the Gunnison NP put on a good show for one van.

**COYOTE** (*Canis latrans*) – Several sightings, including two animals together along the Arkansas River Valley near La Junta.

**ELK** (*Cervus canadensis*) – A few animals were along the roadsides near Montrose.

**MULE DEER** (*Odocoileus hemionus*) – The common deer with big ears in the west.

**MOOSE** (*Alces alces*) – We saw two during our evening moose cruise east of Walden.

**PRONGHORN** (*Antilocapra americana*) – A few were on the eastern plains, and we saw more in the sage flats west of Grand Junction.

**BIGHORN SHEEP** (*Ovis canadensis*) – We saw these large, distinctive mammals in the Rockies on four different days. It's pretty startling to see them walking around on the shoulder of I-70!

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

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**Totals for the tour: 150 bird taxa and 22 mammal taxa**